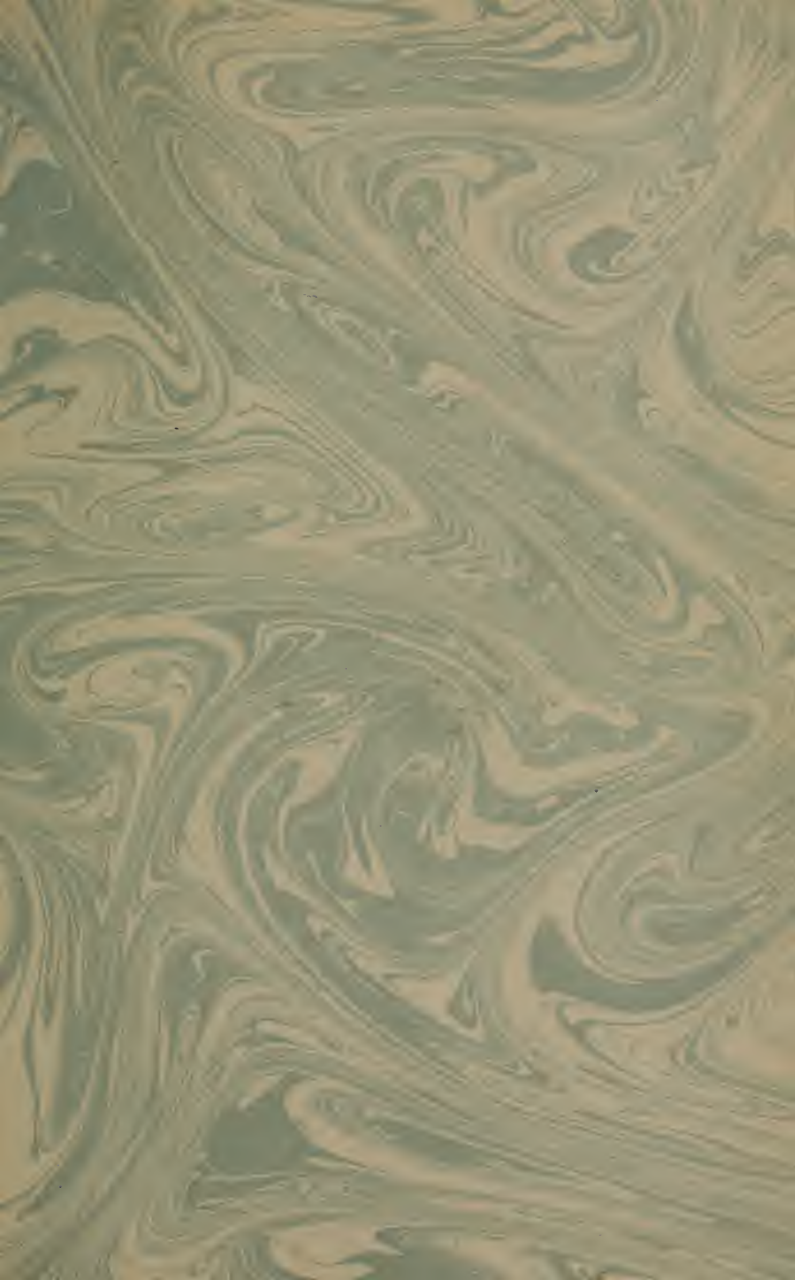


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THE FLAG OF DISTRESS.

THE FLAG OF DISTRESS:

A Story of the South Sea.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1876.

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THE FLAG OF DISTRESS.

CHAPTER I.

“CASTLES IN SPAIN.”

GOMEZ is still at the wheel ; his “trick” having commenced at the change of the watches. As known, he is not alone, but with Hernandez beside him.

Both are youngish men, neither above thirty ; and both of swarthy complexion, though with beards of different colours ; that of Gomez black, the other’s reddish-brown. Besides having heavy moustaches, their whiskers stand well forward on their jaws, and around their throats ; growing so luxuriantly as to conceal the greater portion of

their faces ; the expression upon which it is difficult to determine. Equally to tell aught of their figures, draped as these are in rough sailor toggery, cut wide and hanging loosely about their bodies. Both, however, appear of about medium height, Gomez a little the taller, and more strongly built. On their heads are the orthodox "sou-wester" hats ; that of Gomez drawn slouching over eyes that almost continually glow with a sullen lurid light, as if he were always either angry or on the point of becoming so. At the same time he habitually keeps his glance averted, as though wishing to conceal either his thoughts or his features ; it may be both.

Acting in the capacity of a common sailor, he has nevertheless hitherto appeared to control the second-mate, as most others of the crew, and more especially the Spaniards.

This, alleged by Striker, has been observed by Harry Blew himself ; so that of the conspirators Gomez is unquestionably chief. Though Padilla engaged the hands, the instructions must have

proceeded from him, and all were shipped on conditions similar to those accepted by the Sydney Ducks.

Five thousand dollars, for less than a month's service, would be wages too unprecedentedly large to be offered without creating suspicion of some sinister intent. Nor did he, who offered it, leave this point untouched. While promising such big bounty, he exacted a promise in return : that each recipient of it was to bear a hand in *whatever he might be called on to do*.

The men so indefinitely engaged, and on such latitudinarian terms, were not the ones to stick at trifles ; and most of them stepped aboard the Chilian ship prepared to assist in the perpetrating of any known crime in the calendar. Since becoming better acquainted with the particulars of what they have been shipped for, not one of them has shown disposition to back out of it. They are still ready to do the deed ; but, as seen, under changed conditions.

Gomez is not yet aware of the strike that has

taken place ; though during the day he has heard some whisperings, and is half expecting trouble with his confederates. Hernandez also, though it is not of this they are now conversing as they stand together at the wheel.

The theme which engages them is altogether different ; beauty, not booty, being the subject of their discourse, which is carried on in a low tone, though loud enough to be heard by any one standing near.

But they are not afraid. No one is within earshot. Their comrades of the watch are away in the forward part of the vessel, while those of the off-watch are below in her fore-peak—the skipper asleep in his cabin—the passengers in theirs.

It is about two of these last they are talking ; and in terms, that, for common sailors, might seem strange—rough ribald men bandying free speech, and making familiar remarks, about such delicate high-born dames as Carmen Montijo and Ñez Alvarez !

But not strange to one acquainted with Gil Gomez and Jose Hernandez—and too intelligible if knowing their intention towards these ladies. It may be learnt by listening to their conversation; Hernandez, who has introduced the subject, asking :

“About the *muchachas*? What are we to do with them after getting ashore?”

“Marry them, of course,” promptly answers the other. “That’s what I mean doing with the beautiful Doña Carmen. Don’t you intend the same with Doña Iñez?”

“Of course—if I can.”

“Can! There need be no difficulty about it, *camarado*.”

“I hope not; though I think there will, and a good deal. There’s certain to be some.”

“In what way?”

“Suppose they don’t give their consent?”

“A fig for their consent! We shall force it! Don’t be letting that scare you. Whether they’re agreeable or not, we’ll have a marriage ceremony,

or the form of one—all the same. I can fix that, or I'm much mistaken about the place we're going to, and the sort of men we may expect to meet there. When I last looked on Santiago de Veragua—bidding adieu to a place that was rather pleasant—I left behind a few old familiars, who are not likely to have forgotten me, though long years have rolled by since. Some there, who will still be willing, and ready, to do me a service, I doubt not; especially, now I have the means to pay for it, and handsomely. If the Padre Padierna be yet alive, he'll marry me to Carmen Montijo without asking *her* any questions; or, if he did, caring what answers she might give to them. It's now nine years since I saw the worthy monk, and he may have kicked up his sandalled soles long ago; though that's not likely. He was a tough old sinner, and knew how to take care of himself. However, it won't matter much. If he's under ground, I've got another string to my bow, in the young *cura*, Gonzaga; who, in my time, had charge of souls in a *pueblita*,

nearer the place where I hope we shall be able to make shore. He may by this have risen to be grand church dignitary. Whether or not, I've but little fear of his having forgotten old times, when he and I used to go shares in certain little adventures of the amorous kind. So you perceive, *mio amigo*, we're not drifting towards a desert coast, inhabited only by savages; but one where we'll find all the means and appliances of civilization—among them a priest, to do the little bit of ecclesiastical service we may stand in need of, and without asking awkward questions, or caring a *claco* for consequences. Neither the monk, nor cura, I've spoken of will trouble their consciences on that score, so long as it's *me*. More especially after I've shown them the colour of the stuff, with which our pockets will be so plentifully lined. And if neither of my old acquaintances turn up, there are no end of others, who'll be willing to tie the knot that's to make us happy for life. I tell you, *hombre*; we're steering straight towards an earthly paradise. You'll find Santiago all that."

“I hope it may be, as you say.”

“You may rest sure of it. Once in the old Veraguan town, with these women as our wives—and they no longer able to question our calling them so—we can enter society without fear of showing our faces. And with this big *bonanza* at our backs, we may lead a luxurious life there; or go anywhere else it pleases us. As for returning to your dear California, as you call it, you won’t care for that when you’ve become a Benedict.”

“You’ve made up your mind, then, that we marry them?”

“Of course I have, and for certain reasons. Otherwise, I shouldn’t so much care, now that they’re in our power, and we can dictate terms to them. You can do as you please respecting marriage, though you have the same reasons as myself, for changing your *señorita* into a *señora*.”

“What do you allude to?”

“To the fact that both these damsels have large properties in Spain, as a worthy friend in San Francisco made me aware just before leaving.

The Doña Carmen will inherit handsomely at her father's death, which is the same as if said and done now. I don't refer to his gold-dust, but a large landed property, the old gentleman is soon coming into in Biscay; and which, please God, I shall some day look up and take possession of. While the other has no end of acres in Andalusia, with whole streets of houses in Cadiz. To get all that, these women must be our wives; otherwise, we should have no claim to it, nor yet be able to show our faces in Spain.”

“Of course I'm glad to hear about all that,” rejoins Hernandez; “but, if you believe me, it's not altogether the money that's been tempting me throughout this whole affair. I'm mad in love with Iñez Alvarez,—so mad, that if she hadn't a *claco* in the world I'm willing to be her husband.”

“Say, rather, her master; as I intend to be of Carmen Montijo. Ah! once we get ashore, I'll teach her submission. The haughty dame will learn what it is to be a wife. And if not an obe-

dient one, *por Dios!* she shall have a divorce, that is, after I've squeezed out of her the Biscayan estate. Then she can go free, if it so please her."

On pronouncing this speech, the expression on the speaker's countenance is truly satanic. It seems to foreshadow a sad fate for Carmen Montijo.

For some seconds there is silence between the plotters. Again breaking it, Hernandez says:

"I don't like the idea of our putting the old gentleman to death. Is there no other way we could dispose of him?"

"Pah, *hombre!* You're always harping on the strings of humanity; striking discordant sounds too. There's no other way by which we can be ourselves safe. If we let him live, he'd be sure to turn up somewhere, and tell a tale that would get both our throats grappled by the *garrota*. The women might do the same, if we didn't make wives of them. Once that, and we can make exhibit of our marriage certificates, their words will go for nought. Besides, having full marital

powers, we can take precautions against any scandal. Don Gregorio has got to die; the skipper too; and that rough fellow, the first-mate—with the old blackamoor *cocinero*.”

“*Maldita!* I don’t feel up to all that. It will be rank wholesale murder.”

“Nothing of the sort—only drowning. And we needn’t do that either. They can be tied before we scuttle the ship, and left to go down along with her. By the time she sinks, we’ll be a long way off; and you, my sensitive and sentimental friend, neither see nor hear anything to give your tender heart a horror.”

“The thought of it’s enough.”

“But how is it to be helped? If they’re allowed to live, we’d never be out of danger. Maybe, you’d like to abandon the business altogether, and resign thought of ever having the pretty *Iñez* for a wife?”

“There you mistake, *amigo*. Sooner than that, I’ll do the killing myself. Ay, kill *her*, rather than she shall get away from me.”

“Now you’re talking sense. But see! What’s up yonder?”

The interrogatory is from seeing a group of men assembled on the fore-deck, alongside the hatch. The sky cloudless, with a full moon overhead, shows it to be composed of nearly, if not all, the *Condor’s* crew. The light also displays them in earnest gesticulation, while their voices, borne aft, tell of some subject seriously debated.

What can it be? They of the last dog-watch, long since relieved, should be asleep in their bunks. Why are they now on deck? Their presence there, gives surprise to the two at the wheel.

And while engaged in expressing it, and interrogating one another, they perceive the second-mate coming aft—as also, that he makes approach in hurried, yet stealthy manner.

“What is it?” asks Gomez.

“A strike,” answers Padilla. “A mutiny among the men we engaged to assist us.”

“On what grounds?”

“They’ve got to know all about the gold-dust—even to the exact quantity there is of it.”

“Indeed! And what’s their demand?”

“That we shall share it with them. They say they’ll have it so.”

“The devil they do!”

“The old *ladrone*, Striker, began it. But what will astonish you still more; the first-mate knows all our plans, and ’s agreed to go in along with us. He’s at the head of the mutineers, too, and insists on the same thing. They swear, if we don’t divide equally, the strongest will take what they can. I’ve hastened hither to ask you what we’d best do.”

“They’re determined, are they?”

“To the death—they all say so.”

“In that case,” mutters Gomez, after a moment or two spent in reflection, “I suppose we’ll have to yield to their demands. I see no help for it. Go straight back, and say something to pacify them. Try to put things off, till we have time to consider.

Maldita! this is an unexpected difficulty—ugly as sin itself!”

Padilla is about to return to his discontented shipmates on the forward deck; but is saved the journey, seeing them come aft. Nor do they hesitate to invade the sacred precincts of the quarter; for they have no fear of being forbidden. There they pause for a few seconds, and then continue on.

Soon they mount to the poop-deck, and cluster around the wheel; the whole crew now present — mates as men — all save the captain and cook. And all take part in the colloquy that succeeds, either in speech or by gesture.

The debate is short, and the question in dispute soon decided. Harry Blew and Jack Striker are the chief spokesmen; and both talk determinedly; the others, with interests identical, backing them up by gestures, and exclamations of encouragement.

“Shipmates!” says the first-officer, “this

thing we're all after should be equally divided between us.”

“Must be,” adds Striker, with an oath. “Share an' share alike. That's the only fair way. An' the only one we'll gie in to.”

“Stick to that, Striker!” cries Davis; “we'll stand by ye.”

“*Pe gar ! certainement,*” endorses the Frenchman. “Vat for no? *Sacré bleu!* ve vill. I am for *les droits de matelot—le vrai chose démocratique.* Vive le fair play!”

Dane and Dutchman, with Tarry and Slush, speak in the same strain.

The scene is as short, as violent. The Spaniards perceiving themselves in a minority, and a position that threatens unpleasant consequences, soon yield, declaring their consent to an equal distribution of the “dust.”

After which, the men belonging to the off-watch retire to the fore-castle, and there betake themselves to their bunks; while the others scatter about the decks.

Gil Gomez remains at the wheel, his time not yet being up; Hernandez beside him. For some moments, the two are silent, their brows shadowed with gloom. It is not pleasant to lose fifty thousand dollars apiece; and something like this have they lost within the last ten minutes. Still there is a reflection upon which they can fall back well calculated to soothe them—other bright skies ahead.

Gomez first returning to think of this, says:

“ Never mind, *amigo*. There will be money enough to serve our present purposes all the same. And for the future we can both build on a good sure foundation.”

“ On what ? ”

“ On our ‘ Castles in Spain ! ’ ”

CHAPTER II.

COLDLY RECEIVED.

THE *mal de mer* is no respecter of persons. Voyagers of every age, and either sex, must pay toll to it; the which it indiscriminately, if not equally, exacts from the strong robust youth, and the frail delicate maiden. Even beauty must submit to this merciless malady; at whose touch red lips turn pale, and rose-tinted cheeks show wan and wasted. Afflicting, on first acquaintance with it, it is always more or less disagreeable, and ever ready at offering its hand to those who go down to the sea in ships—that hand whose very touch is palsy.

The voyage Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez are now making is not their first. Both have been at sea before—in the passage out from

Spain. But, this does not exempt them from the terrible infliction, and both suffer from it.

Stricken down by it, they are for several days confined to the cabin ; most of the time to their state-room ; and, as ill-luck would have it, without any one of their own sex to wait upon them—a want due to circumstances partially accidental, but wholly unexpected. The Chilian skipper, not accustomed to have a stewardess on his ship, had never thought of such a thing ; his whole attention being taken up in collecting that crew, so difficult to obtain ; while their own waiting-maid, who was to have accompanied the young ladies on their voyage, failed them at the eleventh hour ; having preferred undertaking a journey of a different kind—not to Spain, but the altar of Hymen. At the last moment of embarkation, she was missing ; her Californian *amante* having persuaded her to remain behind.

Withal, the lady voyagers have not been so badly attended. The old negro cook—acting

also as steward, comes up to the occasion; for he has a tender heart under his rough sable skin, and waits upon them with delicate assiduity.

And Captain Lantanas is equally assiduous in his attentions, placing most of his time at their disposal, with whatever else, he can think of, likely to alleviate their suffering.

In due course they recover; Carmen first, from being of more robust habit and stronger constitution. But both are at length able to show themselves out of their state-room, and after a day or two waiting for fine weather, they venture upon deck.

During this sojourn below, they have had no communication with any one, save Don Gregorio—who has been like themselves, invalided—and of course the captain and cook. But not any of the officers, or sailors, of the ship. Indeed, on these they have never set eyes, excepting on that day when they sailed out through the Golden Gate. But, then,

their thoughts were otherwise occupied—too much engrossed with certain personages absent, to care for any that were present; least of all the sailors of the ship—these scarce getting a glance from them.

Still there is one they have a strong desire to see, and also speak with. Not a common sailor, but the *piloto*, or first-officer, of the vessel—for they are aware the English seaman has been promoted to this responsible post.

During their forced confinement in the state-room, they have often held discourse about him; this connected with a subject that gives them the greatest concern, and no little pain. There is still rankling in their breasts that matter unexplained; no letters left by their lovers at their abrupt departure, save the one for Don Gregorio, with salutation to themselves, so coldly, ceremoniously formal. It is to inquire about that, they are so anxious for an interview with Harry Blew, hoping, almost believing him

to have been entrusted with some verbal message he has not yet delivered.

From the terms in which Crozier spoke of him while giving account of how he had saved his life, it is natural to suppose, that between preserved and preserver there should be confidence of a very intimate kind. Therefore Carmen still more than half believes the sailor has a word for herself—kept back for the want of opportunity. She recalls certain things he said jocularly, on the day he brought Crozier's letter to the house, and while she was herself showing him hospitality. These went so far as to show, that the ex-man-o'-war's man was not altogether ignorant of the relations existing between her and his old officer. And now she longs to renew conversation with him, hoping to hear more of those same pleasant words—perhaps get explanation of the others not so pleasant—in the letter. Iñez is affected with a like longing, for she too feels the slight they conveyed—if not so much as her aunt, still enough to wish for their true interpretation.

Both thus basing their hopes on Harry Blew, they have been for some time on the look-out for him, though as yet unsuccessfully. Several times have they ascended to the deck ; but without seeing him, or only afar off, and, to all appearance, busily engaged with his duties about the ship.

Of course they do not expect him to come to them ; and, with the secret purpose they have conceived, dislike summoning him ; while he on his part, appears to keep aloof, or, at all events, does not draw near—perhaps not desiring to be deemed intrusive. For, although first-officer of the vessel, he is still only a rough sailor, and may think himself ill qualified for the company of ladies.

Whatever the reason, they have been several times above, without finding an opportunity to speak with him ; and for this they wait with irksome impatience.

At length, however, it seems to have arrived. They have come out on the quarter, in front of

the round-house door, and are seated on chairs which the considerate skipper brought up for them. He is himself by their side, endeavouring to entertain them by pointing out the various objects on his vessel, and explaining their uses.

They give but little heed to the technical dissertations of the well-meaning man, and only a passing glance at the objects indicated. Even the two gigantic apes, that go gambolling about the decks—exhibiting uncouth gestures, and uttering hoarse cries—fail to fix their attention; though Captain Lantanas tells them many curious tales of these creatures—*myas* monkeys, he calls them—which he has brought with him from Borneo. Too simple-minded to observe the inattention of his listeners, he is proceeding still farther to illustrate the habits of the oranges, when his lecture on natural history is interrupted, by the necessity for his taking an observation of the sun. It is a few minutes before mid-day, and he must needs determine his latitude. So making

apology to the ladies, he hurries down to the cabin to get his quadrant.

His leaving them is a relief, for they see the first-mate moving about, and have hopes of being able to accost, and enter into conversation with him. True, he seems busy as ever; but it is nigh the hour when the men of the fore-castle go down to their dinners, and then they may have the opportunity while he is disengaged.

For some time they sit watching, and waiting. He is in the waist with several of the sailors around him, occupied about one of the boats, there slung upon its davits.

While regarding him and his movements, the ladies cannot avoid also observing those of the men, nor help being struck by them. Not so much their movements, as their appearance, and the expression seen on some of their countenances. On no one of them is it pleasant, but on the contrary scowling and savage. Never before have they seen so many faces wearing such disagreeable looks—that is, gathered in one group

—and they have passed through the streets of San Francisco, where the worst types may be met. Many of them—indeed nearly all—are not only unprepossessing, but positively forbidding; and the young girls, not desiring to encounter certain glances, sent towards them, with an impudent effrontery, turn their eyes away.

Just then, Harry Blew, separating from the sailors, is seen coming aft. It is in obedience to a message which the black cook has brought up out of the cabin—an order from Captain Lantanas for his first-officer to meet him on the quarter-deck, and assist in “taking the sun.”

But the captain has not yet come up; and, on reaching the quarter, the ex-man-o'-war's man, for the first time since he shipped on the Chilian craft, finds himself alone in the presence of the ladies.

They salute him with an *empressement*, which, to their surprise, is but coldly returned! Only a slight bow; after which he appears to busy

himself with the log-slate lying on the capstan head.

One closely scrutinizing him, however, would see that this is pretence ; for his eyes are not on the slate, but furtively turned towards the ship's waist, watching the men, from whom he has just separated, and who seem to have their eyes upon *him*.

The young ladies thus repulsed—and almost rudely, as they take it—make no farther attempt to bring on a conversation ; but, forsaking their chairs, hasten down the companion-stairs, and on to their own state-room—there to talk over a disappointment that has given chagrin to both, but which neither can satisfactorily explain.

The more they reflect on the conduct of the English sailor, the stranger it seems to them ; and the greater is their vexation. For now they feel almost sure, that something must have happened ; that same thing—whatever it be—which dictated those cruel parting compliments. They seem doubly so now ; for now they have evidence

that such must have been the sentiment—almost proof of it in the behaviour of Harry Blew.

They are hurt by it—stung to the quick—and never again during that voyage do they attempt entering into conversation with the first-officer of the *Condor*, nor with any one belonging to her—save her kindly captain, and the cook, equally kind to them, though in a different way.

Indeed, they no longer care to go on deck; only on rare occasions showing themselves there, as if they disliked looking upon him who has so rudely reminded them of the treason of their lovers.

Can it be treason? And if so, why? They ask these questions with eyes bent upon their fingers—on rings encircling them—placed there by those they are suspecting of disloyalty! The insignia should be proof of the contrary. But it is not, for love is above all things suspicious—however doting, ever doubting. Even on this evidence of its truth they no longer lean, and scarce console themselves with the hope, which

that has hitherto been sustaining them. Now farther off than ever seems the realization of that sweet expectancy hoped for and held out at last parting, promised in the phrase: "*Hasta Cadiz!*"

CHAPTER III.

“DOWN HELM.”

“LAND, HO!”

The cry is from a man stationed on the fore-topmast cross-trees of the *Condor*. Since sunrise he has been aloft—on the look-out for land. It is now near noon, and he has sighted it.

Captain Lantanas is not quite certain of what land it is. He knows it is the Veraguan coast, but does not recognize the particular place.

Noon soon after coming on, with an unclouded sky, enables him to catch the sun in its meridian altitude, and so make him sure of a good sight. It gives for latitude $7^{\circ} 20' N.$, while his chronometer furnishes him with the longitude, $82^{\circ} 12' W.$

As the Chilian is a skilled observer, and has confidence in the observations he has made, the

land in sight should be the island of Coiba ; or an islet that covers it, called Hicaron. Both are off the coast of Veragua, westward from Panama Bay, and about a hundred miles from its mouth ; into which the *Condor* is seeking to make entrance.

Having ciphered out his reckoning, the skipper enters it on his log :

“*Lat.* 7° 20' N. *Long.* 82° 12' W. *Wind* W.S.W. *Light breeze.*”

While penning these slight memoranda, little dreams the Chilian skipper how important they may one day become. The night before, while taking an observation of the stars, could he have read them astrologically, he might have discovered many a chance against his ever making another entry in that log-book.

A wind west-sou'-west is favourable for entering the Bay of Panama. A ship steering round Cabo Mala, once she has weathered this much dreaded headland, will have it on her starboard quarter. But the *Condor*, coming down from north, gets it

nearly abeam ; and her captain perceiving he has run a little too much coastwise, cries out to the man at the wheel :

“ Hard a-starboard ! Put the helm down ! Keep well off the land ! ”

Saying this, he lights a cigarrito ; for a minute or two amuses himself with his monkeys, always playful at meeting him ; then, ascending to the poop-deck, enters into conversation with company more refined—his lady passengers.

These, with Don Gregorio, have gone up some time before ; and stand on the port-side, gazing at the land—of course delightedly ; since it is the first they have seen since the setting of that sun, whose last rays gleamed upon the portals of the Golden Gate, through which they had passed out of California.

The voyage has been somewhat wearisome ; the *Condor* having encountered several adverse gales—to say nothing of the long period spent in traversing more than three thousand miles of ocean-waste, with only once or twice a

white sail seen afar off, to vary its blue monotony.

The sight of *terra firma*, with the thought of soon setting foot on it, makes all joyous; and Captain Lantanas adds to their exhilaration by assuring them, that in less than twenty-four hours he will enter the Bay of Panama; and in twenty-four after, bring his barque alongside the wharf of that ancient port, so oft pillaged by the *filibusteros*,—better known as buccaneers. It is scarcely a damper when he adds, “Wind and weather permitting;” for the sky is of sapphire hue, and the gentle breeze wafting them smoothly along, seems steady, and as if it would continue in the same quarter; which chances to be the right one.

After staying an hour or so on deck, indulging in cheerful converse, and happy anticipations, the tropic sun, grown too sultry for comfort, drives them down to the cabin, for shade, and *siesta*—this last, a habit of all Spanish-Americans.

The Chilian skipper is also accustomed to take his afternoon nap; and this day, in particular,

there is no need for his remaining longer on deck. He has determined his latitude, cast up his dead reckoning, and set the *Condor* on her course. Sailing on a sea without icebergs, or other dangerous obstructions, he can go to sleep without anxiety on his mind.

So, leaving his second-mate in charge—the first being off watch—he descends to the cabin, and enters his sleeping-room on the starboard side.

But before lying down, he summons the cook, and gives orders for a dinner—to be dressed in the very best style the ship's stores can furnish; this in celebration of the event of having sighted land.

Then, stretching himself along a sofa, he is soon slumbering; profoundly, as one with nothing on his conscience to keep him awake.

For a time, the barque's decks appear deserted. No one seen, save the helmsman at the wheel, and the second-mate standing by his side. The sailors not on duty have betaken themselves to the fore-castle, and are lolling in their bunks; while those of the working-watch—with no work

to do—have sought shady quarters, to escape from the sun's heat, now excessive.

The breeze has been gradually dying away, and is now so light that the vessel scarce makes steerage way. The only vigorous movements are those made by the Bornean apes. To them the great heat, so far from being disagreeable, is altogether congenial. They chase one another along the decks, accompanying their grotesque romping by cries equally grotesque—a hoarse jabbering, that sounds with weird strangeness throughout the otherwise silent ship. Except this, everything is profoundly still; no surging of waves, no rush of wind through the rigging, no booming of it against the bellied sails; only now and then a flap of one blown back, and aboard. The breeze has fallen to "light;" and the *Condor*, though with all canvas spread, and studding-sails out, is scarce making two knots an hour. This too with the wind well upon her quarter.

Still, there is nothing strange about the barque making so little way. What is strange, is the

direction in which the breeze is now striking her. It is upon her starboard quarter, instead of the beam, as it should be ; and as Captain Lantanas left it on going below !

Yet, since he went below, the wind has not shifted, not by a single point !

The barque must have changed her course ; and indeed, has done this ; the man at the wheel having put the helm *up*, instead of *down*, causing her to draw closer to the land, in direct contradiction to the orders of the captain !

Is it ignorance on the steersman's part ? No ; that cannot be. Gil Gomez has the helm ; and, being a seaman, should know how to handle it. Besides, Padilla is standing beside him ; and the second-mate, whatever his moral qualities, knows enough for the “conning” of a ship ; and cannot fail to observe that the barque is running too much inshore.

Why the skipper's orders are not being carried out is because they who now guide the *Condor's* course, do not intend that her

keel shall ever cleave the waters of Panama Bay.

Why, this is told by the speech passing between them :

“ You know all about the coast in there ? ” inquires Padilla, pointing to land looming up on the port-side.

“ Every inch of it ; at least, sufficient to make sure of a place where we can put in. That headland rising on the port-bow is Punta Marietta. We must stand well under, taking care not to round it before evening. If we did, and the breeze blow off shore, which it surely will, we'd have trouble to make back. With this light wind, we won't make much way before nightfall. When Lantanas and the rest are down at dinner, we can put about, and run along till we sight a likely landing-place.”

“ So far as being looked after by Lantanas,” observes the second-mate, “ we need have no fear. To-day the cabin-dinner is to be a grand spread. I overheard his orders to that effect. He intends

making things pleasant for his passengers before parting with them. As a matter of course, he'll stay all evening below—perhaps get fuddled to boot—which may spare us some trouble. It looks like luck, doesn't it ? ”

“Not much matter about that,” rejoins Gomez ; “ it'll have to end all the same. Only, as you say, his staying below will make things a little easier, and save some unpleasantness in the way of blood-spilling. After dinner, the señoritas are sure to come on deck. They've done so every night, and I hope they won't make this night an exception. If Don Gregorio, and the skipper keep downstairs, and——”

The dialogue is interrupted by the striking of bells to summon the relief-watch on duty.

Soon as the change is effected, Harry Blew takes charge, Striker replacing Gomez at the helm.

Just at this instant, the head of Captain Lantanas shows above the coaming of the companion stair.

Gomez, seeing him, glides back to the wheel, gives a strong pull at the spokes, Striker assisting him, so as to bring the barque's head up, and the wind upon her beam.

“Good heavens!” exclaims the skipper excitedly, rushing on up the stair, and out. For he sees what not only excites his surprise, but makes him exceedingly angry.

Soon as setting his foot on deck, he steps briskly on to the rail, and looks out over the sea—shoreward, towards land, where no land should be seen!

First he glances ahead, then over the port-side, and again in the direction of the vessel's course. What sees he there to make such an impression upon him? A high promontory stretching out into the ocean, almost butting against the bows of his ship! It is Punta Marietta!

He knows the headland, but knows, too, it should not be on the bow had his instructions been attended to.

“ *Que cosa!* ” he cries in a bewildered way, rubbing his eyes, to make sure they are not deceiving him; then to the helmsman:

“ What does this mean, sir? You’ve been keeping too close inshore—the very contrary to what I commanded! Helm down—hard!”

Striker grumblingly obeys, bringing the barque up close to wind. Then the skipper turning angrily upon him, demands to know why his orders have not been carried out.

The ex-convict excuses himself, saying; that he has just commenced his trick, and knows nothing of what has been done before. He is keeping the vessel to on the same course she was on, when he took her from the last steersman.

“ Who was the last?” thunders the irate skipper.

“ Gil Gomez,” gruffly replies Striker.

“ Yes; it was he,” says the first-mate, who has come aft along with the captain. “ The watch was Señor Padilla’s, and Gomez has just left the wheel.”

“Where is Gomez?” asks the captain, still in a towering passion, unusual for him.

“Gone forward, sir: he’s down in the fore-castle.”

“Call him up! Send him to me at once!”

The first-officer hurries away toward the head, and soon returns, Gomez with him.

The latter meets the gaze of Lantanas with a sullen look, which seems to threaten disobedience.

“How is this?” asks the Chilian. “You had the wheel during the last watch. Where have you been running to?”

“In the course you commanded, Captain Lantanas.”

“That can’t be, sir. If you’d kept her on as I set her, the land couldn’t have been there, lying almost across our cut-water. I understand my chart too well to have made such a mistake.”

“I don’t know anything about your chart,” sulkily rejoins the sailor. “All I know is, that I kept the barque’s head as directed. If she hasn’t

answered to it, that's no fault of mine ; and I don't much like being told it is.”

The puzzled skipper again rubs his eyes, and takes a fresh look at the coast-line. He is as much mystified as ever. Still the mistake may have been his own ; and as the relieved steersman appears confident about it, he dismisses him without further parley, or reprimand.

Seeing that there will be no difficulty in yet clearing the point, his anger cools down, and he is but too glad to withdraw from an angry discussion uncongenial to his nature.

The *Condor*, now hauled close to wind, soon regains lost weatherway, sufficient for the doubling of Punta Marietta ; and before the bells of the second dog-watch are sounded, she is in a fair way of weathering the cape. The difficulty has been more easily removed by the wind veering suddenly round to the opposite point of the compass. For now near night, the land-breeze has commenced blowing off shore.

Well acquainted with the coast, and noticing

the change, Captain Lantanas believes all danger past ; and with the tranquillity of his temper restored, goes back into his cabin, to join his passengers at dinner, just in the act of being served.

CHAPTER IV.

PANAMA OR SANTIAGO ?

It is the hour of setting the first night-watch, and the bells have been struck; not to summon any sailor from the fore-castle, but intended only for the cabin and the ears of Captain Lantanas—lest the absence of the usual sound should awaken his suspicion, that all was not going right.

This night neither watch will be below, but all hands on deck, mates as foremastmen; and engaged in something besides the navigation of the vessel—in short, in destroying her!

And, soon as the first shades of night descend over her the crew is seen assembling by the manger-board close to the night-heads—all save the man who has charge of the steering, on this occasion Slush.

The muster by the manger-board is to take

measures for carrying out their scheme of piracy and plunder, now on the eve of execution. The general plan is already understood by all ; it but remains to settle some final details.

Considering the atrocity of their design, it is painful to see the first-mate in their midst. A British sailor—to say nought of an old man-of-war's man—better might have been expected of him. But he *is* there ; and not only taking part with them, but apparently acting as their leader.

His speech too clearly proclaims him chief of the conspiring crew. His actions also, as they have ever been, since the day when he signified to Striker his intention to join them. After entering into the conspiracy, he has shown an assiduity to carry it out worthy of a better cause.

His first act was backing up Striker's call for an equal division of the bounty. Holding the position of chief-officer, this at once established his influence over the others ; since increased by the zeal he has displayed—so that he now holds

first place among the pirates, nearly all of them acknowledging, and submitting to, his authority.

If Edward Crozier could but see him now, and hear what he is saying, he would never more have faith in human being. Thinking of Carmen Montijo, the young officer has doubted woman; witnessing the behaviour of Henry Blew, he might not only doubt man, but curse him.

Well for the recreant sailor, Crozier is not present in that conclave by the night-heads of the *Condor*. If he were, there would be speedy death to one, he could not do otherwise than deem a traitor.

But the young officer is far away—a thousand miles of trackless ocean now between *Condor* and *Crusader*—little dreaming of the danger that threatens her to whom he has given heart, and promised hand; while Harry Blew is standing in the midst of ruffians plotting her ruin!

O man! O British sailor! where is your gratitude? What has become of your honour—your

oath? The first gone ; the second disregarded ; the last broken !

Soon as together, the pirates enter upon discussion, the first question before them being about the place where they shall land.

Upon this point there is difference of opinion. Some are for going ashore at once, on a convenient part of the coast in sight ; while others counsel running on till they enter Panama Bay.

At the head of those in favour of the latter is the chief-mate, who gives his reasons thus :

“ By runnin’ up into the Bay o’ Panyma, we’ll get closer to the town ; an’ it’ll be easier to reach it after we’ve done the business we intend doin’, Panyma bein’ a seaport, an’ plenty o’ vessels sailin’ from it. After gettin’ there we’d be able to go every man his own way. Them as wants can cross over the Isthmus, an’ cut off on t’other side. An’ Panyma bein’ full o’ strangers goin’ to Californy, an’ returnin’ from it, we’d be less like to get noticed there. Whiles if we land on the coast here, where thar an’t no good-sized town,

but only some bits o' fishin' villages, we'd be a marked lot—sartin to run a good chance o' bein' took up, an' put into one o' thar prisons. Just possible too, we might land on some part inhabited by wild Indyins, an' lose not only the shinin' stuff, but our scalps. I've heerd say thar's the worst sort o' savages livin' on the coast 'long here. An' supposin' we meet neither Indyins nor whites, goin' ashore in a wilderness covered wi' woods, we might have trouble in makin' our way out o' them. Them thick forests o' the tropics an't so easy to travel through. I've know'd o' sailors as got cast away, perishin' in 'em afore they could reach any settlement. My advice, tharfore, shipmates, be, for us to take the barque on into the Bay; an' when we've got near enough the port, to make sure o' our bein' able to reach it, then put in for the shore. Panyma Bay's big enough to give us plenty choice o' places for our purpose."

"We've heard you out, Mr. Blew," rejoins Gomez. "Now, let me say in answer, you

haven't given a single reason for going by Panama Bay, that won't stand good for doing the very opposite. But there's one worth all, you haven't mentioned, and it's against you. While running up into the Bay, we'd be sure to meet other vessels coming out of it—scores of them. And supposing one should be a man-of-war—a British or American cruiser, say—and she takes it into her head to overhaul us; where would we be then?"

“An' if they did,” returns Blew, “what need for us to be afeerd? Seein' that the barque's papers are all ship-shape, they'd have to leave us as they found us. Let 'em overhaul, an' be blowed!”

“They mightn't leave us as they found us, for all that,” argues Gomez. “Just when they took it into their heads to board the barque, might be when we would be slipping out of her. How then? Besides, other ships would have the chance of spying us at that critical moment. As I've said, your other arguments are wrong, and

I'll answer them in detail. But first, let me tell you all, I've got a pretty accurate knowledge of this coast. I ought to have, considering that I spent several years on and off it, in a business which goes by the name of *contraband*. Now, all round the shores of Panama Bay there's just the sort of wild forest-covered country Mr. Blew talks about getting strayed in. We might land within twenty miles of that port, and yet not be able to reach it, without great difficulty. Danger, too, from the savages, our first-officer seems so much afraid of. Whereas, by putting ashore anywhere along here, we won't be far from the old Nicaraguan road, that runs all through the Isthmus. It will take us to the town of Panama; any that wish to go there. But there's another town as big as it, and better for our purpose; one wherein we'll be less likely to meet the unpleasant experience Mr. Blew speaks of. It isn't much of a place for prisons. I'm speaking of Santiago, the capital city of Veragua; which isn't over a good day's journey from the coast. And we [can

reach it by an easy road. Still that's not the question of greatest importance. What most concerns us is the safety of the place *when we get to it*—and I can answer for Santiago. Unless customs have changed since I used to trifle away some time there—and people too—we'll find some who'll show us hospitality. With the money at our disposal—ay, a tenth part of it—I could buy up the *alcalde* of the town, and every judge in the province."

"That's the sort of town for us—and country too!" exclaim several voices. "Let's steer for Santiago!"

"We'll first have to put about," explains Gomez, "and run along the coast, till we find a proper place for landing."

"Yes," rejoins Harry Blew, speaking satirically, and as if exasperated by the majority going against him. "An' if we put about just now, we'll stand a good chance of goin' slap on them rocks on the port beam. Thar's a line o' breakers all along shore, far's I can see. How's a boat to

be got through them? She'd be bilged to a sartinty."

"There are breakers, as you say," admits Gomez; "but their line doesn't run continuous, as it appears to do. I remember several openings where a boat, or ship for that matter, may be safely got through. We must look out for one of them."

"*Vaya, camarados!*" puts in Padilla, with a gesture of impatience. "We're wasting time, which just now is valuable. Let's have the barque about, and stand along the coast, as Gil Gomez proposes. I second his proposal; but, if you like, let it go to a vote."

"No need; we all agree to it."

"Ay; all of us."

"Well, shipmates," says Harry Blew, seeing himself obliged to give way, and conceding the point with apparent reluctance; "if ye're all in favour o' steerin' up coast, I an't goin' to stand out against it. It be the same to me one way, or t'other. Only I thought, an' still

think, we'd do better by runnin' up toward Panyma."

"No, no; Santiago's the place for us. We've decided to go there."

"Then to Santiago let's go. An' if the barque's to be put about, I tell ye there's no time to be lost. Otherways, we'll go into them whitecaps, sure; the which would send this craft to Day Jones sooner than we intend. If we're smart about it, I dar say, we can manage to scrape clear o' them; the more likely, as the wind's shifted, an' 's now off-shore. It'll be a close shave, for all that."

"Plenty of sea-room," says the second-mate. "But let's about with her at once!"

"You see to it, Padilla!" directs Gomez, who, from his success in having his plan adopted, in opposition to that of the Englishman, feels his influence increased so much, he may now take command.

The second-mate starts aft, and going up to the helmsman, whispers a word in his ear.

Instantly the helm is put hard up, and the barque paying off, wears round from east to west-nor'-west. The sailors at the same time brace about her yards, and trim her sails for the changed course; executing the manœuvre, not, as is usual, with a chorused chant, but silently, as if the ship were a spectre, and her crew but spectral shadows !

CHAPTER V.

A CHEERFUL CUDDY.

THE *Condor's* cabin is a snug little saloon, such as are often found on trading-vessels, not necessarily for passengers, but where the skipper has an eye to his own comforts, with tastes that require gratification.

Those of Captain Lantanas are refined, beyond the common run of men who follow his profession—usually rough sea-dogs—caring little for aught else save their grub and grog.

That the Chilian skipper is not of this class is proved by the appearance of his “cuddy,” which is neatly, if not luxuriously, furnished; and prettily decorated. In addition to the instruments that appertain to his calling—telescope, aneroid barometer, sextant, and compass, all placed conspicuously in racks—there is a

bookcase of ornamental wood, filled with well-bound volumes ; and several squares of looking-glass inlaid between the doors, that lead to the four little state-rooms—two on each side. There are two settees, with hair-cloth cushions, and lockers underneath the same, in which Don Gregorio's gold-dust is stowed.

Centrally stands a table, eight by six, mahogany, with massive carved legs, and feet firmly fixed to the floor. It is set lengthwise, fore and aft, a stout hair-cloth chair at top, another at bottom, and one at each side—all, like the table, stanchioned to the timbers of the half-deck.

Above a rack, with its array of decanters and glasses ; and in the centre, overhead, a swing-lamp, lacquered brass—so constructed as to throw a brilliant glare on the surface of the table, while giving light more subdued to all other parts of the little cabin.

To-night its rays are reflected with more than ordinary sparkle. For the table beneath is spread with the best plate and glassware Captain

Lantanas can set forth. And in the dishes now on it are the most savoury viands the *Condor's* cook can produce. While in bottles and decanters are wines of best *bouquet* and choicest vintage.

Around are seated the four guests; the Captain, as host, at the head; Don Gregorio, his *vis-à-vis*, at the foot; the ladies at opposite sides—right and left.

As the barque is going before a gentle breeze, without the slightest roll, or pitch, there is no need for guards upon the table. It shows only the spread of snow-white damask, the shining silver plate, the steel of Sheffield, the ware of Sèvres or Worcester, with the usual array of cut-glasses, and decanters. In the centre an epergne, containing fruits, and some flowers, which, despite exposure to the saline breeze, Captain Lantanas has nursed into blooming. But the fruits seem flowers of themselves, having come from California, famed for the products of Pomona. There are peaches, the native growth

of San Franciscan gardens, with plums and nectarines ; melons and grapes from Los Angeles, further south ; with the oranges, plantains, and pine-apples, of San Diego. And, alongside these productions of the tropical and sub-tropical clime, are New-town pippins, that have been imported into California from the far Eastern States, mellowed by a sea-voyage of several thousand miles, around the stormy headland of Cape Horn.

The savoury meats tasted, eaten, and removed, the dessert, with its adjuncts, has been brought upon the table—this including wines of varied sorts. Although not greatly given to drink, the Chilian skipper enjoys his glass ; and on this occasion takes half-a-dozen—it may be more. He is desirous of doing honour to his distinguished guests, and making the entertainment a merry one.

And his amiable effort has success.

In addition to having seen much of the world, he is by birth, and education, a gentleman. Although nothing more than the skipper of a

merchant-ship—a South-Sea trader at that—as already known, he is not one of the rude swaggering sort; but a gentle, kind-hearted creature, as well, if not better, befitted for the boudoir of a lady, than to stir about among tarred ropes, or face conflicting storm.

So kind and good has he shown himself, that his two fair passengers, in the short companionship of less than a month, have grown to regard him with affection; while Don Gregorio looks upon him in the light of a faithful friend. All three feel sorry they are so soon to part company with him. It is the only regret that casts a shadow over their spirits, as they sit conversing around the table so richly furnished for their gratification.

Eating fragrant fruits, and sipping sweet wines, for the moment they forget all about the hour of parting; the easier, as they listen to the tales which he tells to entertain them. He relates strange adventures he has had, on and around the shores of the great South Sea.

He has had encounters with the fierce Figian ; the savage New Caledonian ; both addicted to the horrid habit of anthropophagy. He has been a spectator to the voluptuous dances of Samoa, and looked upon the daughters of Otaheite, Owyhee, whose whole life is love.

With stories of the two extremes—symbols of man's supreme happiness, and his most abject misery—grim cannibals and gay odalisques—he amuses his guests, long detaining them at the table.

Enthralled by his narration—naïve, truthful, in correspondence with the character of the man—all three listen attentively. The señoritas are charmed, and, strange to say, more with his accounts of Figi, and New Caledonia, than those relating to Otaheite and Hawaii. For to the last-named group of islands have gone Edward Crozier and Willie Cadwallader. There these may meet some of the brown-skinned *bayaderes* Captain Lantanas so enthusiastically describes—meet, dance with, and admire them !

But the jealous fancies thus conjured up, are fleeting as the shadows of summer clouds; and, soon passing, give place to pleasanter thoughts. Now that land is near, and a seaport soon to be reached, the young ladies are this night unusually elated; and, listening to the vivid description of South-Sea scenes, they reflect less sadly, and less bitterly on the supposed slight received at the hands of their lovers.

In return, Don Gregorio imparts to the Chilian skipper some confidences hitherto withheld. He is even so far admitted into the family intimacy, as to be told how both the señoritas are soon to become brides. To which is added an invitation, that should he ever carry the *Condor* to Cadiz, he will not only visit them, but make their house his home.

Several hours are passed in this pleasant way; interspersed with song and music—for both Carmen and Inez can sing well, and accompany their singing with the guitar.

At length the ladies retire to their state-room,

not to stay, but to robe themselves, with the design of taking a turn in the open air. The smooth motion of the ship, with the soft moonlight streaming through the cabin windows, tempt them to spend half-an-hour on deck, before going to rest for the night; and on deck go they.

Lantanas and the ex-haciendado remain seated at the table. Warmed by the wine—of which both have partaken pretty freely—the Chilian continues to pour his experiences into the ears of his passenger; while the latter listens with unflagging interest.

Supping choice *canario*, his favourite tippie, the former takes no note of aught passing around, nor thinks of what may be doing on the *Condor's* deck. All through the evening he has either forgotten or neglected the duties appertaining to him as her commanding officer. So much, that he fails to notice a rotatory motion of the cabin, with the table on which the decanters stand; or, if observing, attributed it to the wine having disturbed the equilibrium of his brain.

But the cabin *does* revolve, the table with it, to the extent of a three-quarter circle. Gradually is the movement being made—gently, from the sea being calm—silently, with no voice raised in command—no piping of boatswain's whistle—no song of sailors as they brace round the yards, or board tacks and sheets!—not a sign to tell Captain Lantanas has been set upon a course, astray, and likely to lead to her destruction.

CHAPTER VI.

KILL OR DROWN?

HAVING set the *Condor* course, with Slush still in charge at the helm, the second-mate returns to the fore-deck, where by the manger-board the others are again in deliberation; Gomez counselling, or rather dictating what they are next to do.

The programme he places before them is in part what has been arranged already—to run along coast till they discover a gap in the line of coral reef; for it is this which causes the breakers. Further, they are told, that when such gap be found, they will lower a boat; and having first scuttled the barque, abandon her; then row themselves ashore.

The night is so far favourable to the execution of the scheme. It is a clear moonlight; and run-

ning parallel to the trend of the shore, as they are now doing, they can see the breakers distinctly, their white crests in contrast with the dark *façade* of cliff, which extends continuously along the horizon's edge; here and there rising into hills, one of which looming up on the starboard bow, has the dimensions of a mountain.

The barque is now about a league's distance from land; and half-way between are the breakers, their roar sounding ominously through the calm quiet of the night. As they are making but little way—scarce three knots an hour—one proposes that the boat be lowered at once, and such traps as they intend taking put into her. In such a tranquil sea it will tow alongside in safety.

As this will be some trouble taken off their hands in advance, the plan is approved of, and the pinnace being selected, as the most suitable boat for beaching.

Clustering around it, they commence operations. Two leap lightly inside, insert the plug, ship the rudder, secure the oars and boat-hooks, clear the

life-lines, and cast off the lanyards of the gripes ; the others holding the fall-tackle in hand, to see that they are clear for running. Then taking a proper turn, they lower away.

And, soon as the boat's bottom touches water, with the two men in it, the painter, whose loose end has been left aboard, is hauled fast, bringing the boat abeam, where it is made fast under a set of man-ropes, already dropped over the side.

Other movements succeed ; the pirates passing to and from the forecastle, carrying canvas bags, and bundles of clothing, with such other of their belongings as they deem necessary for a debarkation like that intended. A barrel of pork, another of biscuit, and a beaker of water, are turned out, and handed down into the boat ; not forgetting a keg containing rum, and several bottles of wine they have purloined, or rather taken at will, from Captain Lantanas' locker bins.

The miscellaneous supply is not meant for a voyage, only a stock to serve for that night, which they must needs spend upon the beach—as also

to provision them for the land journey, to be commenced in the morning.

In silence, but with no great show of caution or stealth, are these movements made. They who make them have but little fear of being detected, some scarce caring if they be. Indeed, there is no one to observe them, save those taking part. For the negro cook, after dressing the dinner, and serving it, has gone out of the galley for good; and, now acting as table waiter, keeps below in the cabin.

Soon everything is stowed in the pinnace, except that which is to form its most precious freight; and again the piratical crew bring their heads together, to deliberate about the final step; the time for taking which is fast drawing nigh.

A thing so serious calls for calm consideration, or, at all events, there must be a thorough understanding among them. For it is the disposal of those they have destined as victims. How this is to be done, nothing definite has yet been said. Even the most hardened among them

shrinks from putting it in words. Still is it tacitly understood. The ladies are to be taken along, the others to be dealt with in a different way. But how? that is the question, yet unasked by any, but as well understood by all, as if it had been spoken in loudest voice.

For a time they stand silent, waiting for some one who can command the courage to speak.

And one does this—a ruffian of unmitigated type, whose breast is not stirred by the slightest throb of humanity. It is the second-mate, Paddilla. Breaking silence, he says :

“Let us cut their throats, and have done with it!”

The horrible proposition, more so from its very laconism, despite the auditory to whom it is addressed, does not find favourable response. Several speak in opposition to it; Harry Blew first and loudest. Though broken his word, and forfeited his faith, the British sailor is not so abandoned as to contemplate murder in such cool, deliberate, manner. Some of those around him

have no doubt committed it; but he does not yet feel up to it. Opposing Padilla's counsel, he says:

“What need for our killin' them? For my part, I don't see any.”

“And for your part, what would you do?” sneeringly retorts the second-mate.

“Give the poor devils a chance for their lives.”

“How?” promptly asks Padilla.

“Why; if we set the barque's head out to sea, as the wind's off-shore, she'd soon carry them beyond sight o' land, and we'd niver hear another word o' 'em.”

“No, no! that won't do,” protest several in the same breath. “They might get picked up, and then we'd be sure of hearing of them—may be something more than words.”

“*Carrai!*” exclaims Padilla scornfully; “that *would* be a wise way. Just the one to get our throats in the *garrota*. You forget that Don Gregorio Montijo is a man of the big grandee

kind. And should he ever set foot ashore, after what we'd done to him, he'd have influence enough to make most places—ay, the whole of the habitable globe—a trifle too hot for us. There's an old saw, about dead men telling no tales. No doubt most of you have heard it, and some have reason to know it true. Take my advice, *camarados*, and let us act up to it. What's your opinion, Señor Gomez? ”

“ Since you ask for it,” responds Gomez, speaking for the first time on this special matter, “ my opinion is, that there's no need for any difference amongst us. Mr. Blew's against the spilling of blood, and so would I, if it could be avoided. But it can't, with safety to ourselves; at least not in the way he has suggested. To act as he advises would be madness on our part—nay, more, it might be suicide. Still, there don't seem any necessity for a cold cutting of throats, which has an ugly sound about it. The same with knocking on the head; they're both too brutal. I think, I know a way that will save

us from resorting to either, and, at the same time, ensure our own safety."

"What way?" demanded several voices. "Tell us!"

"One simple enough; so simple, I wonder you haven't all thought of it, same as myself. Of course, we intend sending this craft to the bottom of the sea. But she's not likely to go down all of a sudden; nor till we're a good way off out of sight. We can leave the gentlemen aboard, and let them slip quietly down along with her!"

"Why, that's just what Blew proposes," say several.

"True," returns Gomez; "but not exactly as I mean it. He'd leave them free to go about the ship—perhaps get out of her before she sinks, on a sofa, or hencoop, or something."

"How would *you* do with them?" asks one impatiently.

"Tie, before taking leave of them."

"Bah!" exclaims Padilla, a monster to whom

spilling blood seems congenial. "What's the use of being at all that bother? It's sure to bring some. The skipper will resist, and so 'll the old Don. What then? We'll be compelled to knock them on the head all the same, or toss them overboard. For my part, I don't see the object of making such a worry about it; and still say, let's stop their wind at once!"

"Dash it, man!" cries Striker, hitherto only a listener, but a backer of Harry Blew; "you 'pear to 'a been practisin' a query plan in jobs o' this sort. Mr. Gomez hev got a better way o't, same as I've myself seed in the Australian bush, wheres they an't so bloodthirsty. When they stick up a chap theer, so long's he don't cut up nasty, they settle things by splicin' him to a tree, an' leavin' him to his meditashuns. Why can't we do the same wi' the skipper, an' the Don, an' the darkey—supposin' any o' 'em to show reefracry?"

“That’s it!” exclaims Davis, strengthening the proposal thus endorsed by his chum Striker. “My old pal’s got the correct idea of sich things.”

“Besides,” continues the older of the ex-convicts, “this job seem to me simple enuf. We want the swag, an’ some may want the weemen. Well; we can git both ’ithout the needcessity o’ doin’ murder!”

Striker’s remonstrance sounds strange—under the circumstances, serio-comical.

“What might you call murder?” mockingly asks Padilla. “Is there any difference between their getting their breath stopped by drowning, or the cutting of their throats? Not much to them, I take it; and no more to us. If there’s a distinction, it’s so nice I can’t see it. *Car-ramba!* no.”

“Whether you see it, or not,” interposes Harry Blew, “there be much; and for myself, as I’ve said, I object to spillin’ blood, where the thing an’t absolute needcessary. True, by leavin’

them aboard an' tied, as Mr. Gomez surgests, they'll get drowned, for sartin ; but it'll at least keep our hands clear o' blood murder !”

“ That's true !” cried several in assent. “ Let's take the Australian way of it, and tie them up !”

The assenting voices are nearly unanimous ; and the eccentric compromise is carried.

So far everything is fixed, and it but remains to arrange about the action, and apportion to every one his part.

For this very few words suffice, the apportionment being, that the first-officer, assisted by Davis, who has some knowledge of ship-carpentry, is to see to the scuttling of the vessel ; Gomez and Hernandez to take charge of the girls, and get them into the boat ; Slush to look after the steering ; Padilla to head the party entrusted with the seizure of the gold ; while Striker, assisted by Tarry and the Frenchman, is to secure the unfortunate men by

fast binding, or, as he calls it, "sticking them up."

The atrocious plan is complete, in all its revolting details—the hour of execution at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TINTORERAS.

WITH all sail set, the barque glides silently on to her doom.

Gomez now "cons" Slush the steering, he alone having any knowledge of the coast. They are but a half-league from land, shaving close along the outer edge of the breakers. The breeze blowing off shore makes it easy to keep clear of them.

There is high land on the starboard-bow, gradually drawing to the beam. Gomez remembers it; for in the clear moonlight is disclosed the outline of a hill, which, once seen, could not easily be forgotten; a *cerro* with two summits, and a *col* or saddle-like depression between.

Still, though a conspicuous landmark, it does not indicate any anchorage; only that they are

entering a great gulf which indents the Veraguan coast.

As the barque glides on, he observes a reach of clear water opening inland; to all appearance a bay, its mouth miles in width.

He would run her into it, but is forbidden by the breakers, whose froth-crested belt extends across the entrance from cape to cape.

Running past, he again closes in upon the land, and soon has the two-headed hill abeam, its singular silhouette conspicuous against the moonlit sky. All the more from the moon being directly beyond it, and low down, showing between the twin summits like a great globe-shaped lamp there suspended.

When nearly opposite, Gomez notes an open space in the line of breakers, easily told by its dark tranquil surface, which contrasts with the white horse-tails lashing up on each side of it.

Soon as sighting it, the improvised pilot leaves the helm, after giving Slush some final instructions about the steering. Then forsaking

the poop he proceeds towards the ship's waist, where he finds all the others ready for action. Striker and La Crosse with pieces of rope for making fast the ill-fated men; Padilla and his party armed with axes and crowbars—the keys with which they intend to open the locker-doors.

Near the main-mast, stands the first-mate, a lighted lantern in his hand, Davis beside him, with auger, mallet, and chisel. They are by the hatchway, which they have opened, intending descent into the hold. With the lantern concealed under the skirt of his ample dreadnought, Harry Blew stands within the shadow of the mast, as if reflecting on his faithlessness—ashamed to let his face be seen. He even appears reluctant to proceed in the black business, while affecting the opposite.

As the others are now occupied in various ways, with their eyes turned from him, he steps out to the ship's side, and looks over the rail. The moon is now full upon his face, which, under her

soft innocent beams, shows an expression difficult as ever to interpret. The most skilled physiognomist could not read it. More than one emotion seem struggling within his breast, mingling together, or succeeding each other, quick as the changing hues of the chameleon. Now, as if cupidity, now remorse, anon the dark shadow of despair!

This last growing darker, he draws nearer to the side, and looks earnestly over, as if about to plunge into the briny deep, and so rid himself of a life, ever after to be a burden!

While standing thus, apparently hesitating as to whether he shall drown himself, and have done with it, soft voices fall upon his ear, their tones blending with the breeze, as it sweeps in melancholy cadence through the rigging of the ship. Simultaneously there is a rustling of dresses, and he sees two female forms, robed in white, with short cloaks thrown loosely over their shoulders, and kerchiefs covering their heads.

Stepping out on the quarter-deck, they stand

for a short while, the moon shining on their faces, both bright and innocent as her beams. Then they stroll aft, little dreaming of the doom that awaits them.

That sight should soften his traitorous heart. Instead, it seems but to steel it the more—as if their presence recalled, and quickened within him some vow of revenge. He hesitates no longer; but gliding back to the hatch, climbs over its coaming; and, lantern in hand, drops down into the hold—there to do a deed, which neither light of moon, or sun, should shine upon.

* * * *

Though within the tropic zone, and but a few degrees from the equinoctial line, there is chillness in the air of the night, now nearing its mid-hours.

Drawing their cloaks closer around them, the young ladies mount up to the poop-deck, and stand resting their hands on the taffrail.

For a time they are silent; their eyes directed over the stern, watching the foam

in the ship's wake, lit up with luminous phosphorescence.

They observe other scintillation besides that caused by the *Condor's* keel. There are broad splotches of it all over the surface of the sea, with here and there elongated *sillons*, seemingly made by some creatures in motion, swimming parallel to the ship's course, and keeping pace with her.

They have not voyaged through thirty degrees of the Pacific Ocean to be now ignorant of what these are. They know them to be sharks, as also that some of larger size and brighter luminosity are the tracks of the *tintorera*—that species so much dreaded by the pearl-divers of Panama Bay, and the Californian Gulf.

This night, both *tiburones* and *tintoreras* are more numerous than they have ever observed them—closer also to the vessel's side; for the sharks, observantly, have seen a boat lowered down, which gives anticipation of prey within nearer reach of their ravenous jaws.

“ *Santissima!*” exclaims Carmen, as one makes a dash at some waif drifting astern. “ What a fearful thing it would be to fall overboard here—in the midst of those horrid creatures! One wouldn’t have the slightest chance of being saved. Only to think how little space there is between us and certain death! See that monster just below, with its great, glaring eyes! It looks as if it wanted to leap up, and lay hold of us. Ugh! I mustn’t keep my eyes on it any longer. It makes me tremble in a strange way. I do believe, if I continued gazing at it, I should grow giddy, and drop into its jaws.”

She draws back a pace, or two, and for some moments remains silent—pensive. Perhaps, she is thinking of a sailor saved from sharks after falling among them, and more still of the man who saved him. Whether or no, she soon again speaks, saying :

“ *Sobrina!* are you not glad we’re so near the end of our voyage?”

“ I’m not sorry, *tia*—I fancy no one ever is.

I should be more pleased, however, if it *were* the end of our voyage, which unfortunately it isn't. Before we see Spain, we've another equally as long."

" True—as long in duration, and distance. But otherwise, it may be very different, and I hope more endurable. Across the Atlantic we'll have passage in a big steamship, with a grand dining-saloon, and state sleeping-rooms, each in itself as large as the main cabin of the *Condor*. Besides, we'll have plenty of company—passengers like ourselves. Let us hope they may turn out nice people. If so, our Atlantic voyage will be more enjoyable than this on the Pacific."

" But we've been very comfortable in the *Condor*; and I'm sure Captain Lantanas has done all he could to make things agreeable for us."

" He has indeed, the dear good creature; and I shall ever feel grateful to him. Still you must admit, that however well meant, we've been at times a little bored by his learned dissertations.

O Iñez, it's been awfully lonely, and frightfully monotonous—at least, to me.”

“ Ah ! I understand. What you want is a bevy of bachelors as fellow-passengers, young ones at that. Well ; I suppose there will be some in the big steamer. Like enough, a half-score of our mustached *militarios*, returning from Cuba, and other colonies. Wouldn't that make our Atlantic voyage enjoyable ? ”

“ Not mine—nothing of the sort, as you ought to know. To speak truth, it was neither the loneliness nor monotony of our Pacific voyage that has made it so miserable. Something else.”

“ I think I can guess the something else.”

“ If so, you'll be clever. It's more than I can.”

“ Might it have anything to do with that informal leave-taking ? Come, Carmen ! You promised me you'd think no more about it, till we see them in Cadiz, and have it all cleared up.”

“ You're wrong again, Iñez. It is not anything of that.”

“ What then ? It can't be the *mare amiento* ?

Of it I might complain. I'm even suffering from it now—although the water is so smooth. But you! why you stand the sea as well as one of those rough sailors themselves! You're just the woman to be a naval officer's wife; and when your *novio* gets command of a ship, I suppose you'll be for circumnavigating the world with him."

"You're merry, *mora*."

"Well; who wouldn't be, with the prospect of soon setting foot on land. For my part, I detest the sea; and when I marry my little *guardiamarina*, I'll make him forsake it, and take to some pleasanter profession. And if he prefer doing nothing, by good-luck the rent of my lands will keep us both comfortably, with something to spare for a town house in Cadiz. But say, Carmen! What's troubling you? Surely you must know?"

"Surely I don't, *Iñez*."

"That's strange—a mystery. Might it be regret at leaving behind your *preux chevaliers* of California—that grand, gallant De Lara, whom,

at our last interview, we saw sprawling in the road-dust? You ought to feel relieved at getting rid of him, as I of my importunate suitor, the Señor Calderon. By the way, I wonder whatever became of them? Only to think of their never coming near us to say good-bye! And that nothing was seen or heard of them afterwards! Something must have happened. What could it have been? I've tried to think, but without succeeding."

"So I the same. It is indeed very strange; though I fancy father heard something about them, which he does not wish to make known to us. You remember what happened after we'd left the house—those men coming to it in the night. Father has an idea they intended taking his gold, believing it still there. What's more, I think he half suspects that of the four men—for there appears to have been four of them—two were no other than our old suitors, Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon."

She had almost said *sweethearts*, but the word has a suggestion of pain.

“*Maria de Merced!*” exclaims Iñez. “It’s frightful to think of such a thing. We ought to be thankful to that good saint for saving us from such villains, and glad to get away from a country where their like are allowed to live.”

“*Sobrina*, you’ve touched the point. The very thought that’s been distressing me is the remembrance of those men. Even since leaving San Francisco, as before we left, I’ve had a strange heaviness on my heart—a sort of boding fear—that we haven’t yet seen the last of them. It haunts me like a spectre. I can’t tell why, unless it be from what I know of De Lara. He’s not the man to submit to that ignominious defeat of which we were witnesses. Be assured he will seek to avenge it. We expected a duel, and feared it. Likely there would have been one, but for the sailing of the English ship. Still that won’t hinder such a desperate man as De Lara from going after Edward, and trying to kill him any way he can. I have a fear he’ll follow him—is after him now.”

“What if he be? Your *fiancée* can take care of himself. And so can mine, if Calderon should get into his silly head to go after *him*. Let them go, so long as they don't come after us; which they're not likely—all the way to Spain.”

“I'm not so sure of that. Such as they may make their way anywhere. Professional gamblers—as we now know them to be—travel to all parts of the world. All cities give them the same opportunity to pursue their calling—why not Cadiz? But, Ñez, there's something I haven't told you, thinking you might make mock of it. I've had a fright more than once—several times, since we came aboard.”

“A fright! what sort of a fright?”

“If you promise not to laugh at me, I'll tell you.”

“I promise. I won't.”

“'Twould be no laughing matter were it true. But, of course, it could only be fancy.”

“Fancy about what? Go on, *tia*! I'm all impatience.”

“About the sailors on board. All have bad faces; some of them seem very *demonios*. But there’s one has particularly impressed me. Would you believe it, Iñez, he has eyes exactly like De Lara’s! His features too resemble those of Don Francisco; only that the sailor has a beard and whiskers, while he had none. Of course the resemblance can be but accidental. Still, it caused me a start, when I first observed it, and has several times since. Never more than this very morning, when I was up here, and saw that man. He was at the wheel, all by himself, steering. Several times, on turning suddenly round, I caught him looking straight at me, staring in the most insolent manner. I had half a mind to complain to Captain Lantanas; but reflecting that we were so near the end of our voyage——”

She is not permitted to say more. For at the moment, a man appearing on the poop-deck, as if he had risen out of it, stands before her—the sailor who resembles De Lara!

Making a low bow, he says:

“Not *near* the end of your voyage, *señorita*; but *at it*,” adding with an ironical smile: “Now, ladies! you’re going ashore. The boat is down; and, combining business with pleasure, it’s my duty to hand you into it.”

While he is speaking, another of the sailors approaches Iñez; Hernandez, who offers his services in a similar style and strain.

For a moment, the girls are speechless, through sheer stark astonishment. Horror succeeds, as the truth flashes upon them. And then, instead of coherent speech, they make answer by a simultaneous shriek; at the same time making an attempt to retreat towards the cabin-stair.

Not a step is permitted them. They are seized in strong arms; and half-dragged, half-lifted off their feet, hurried away from the taffrail.

Their cries are stifled by huge woollen caps drawn over their heads, and down to their chins, almost choking them. But though no longer seeing, and only indistinctly hearing, they can tell where they are being taken. They feel them-

selves lifted over the vessel's side, and lowered down man-ropes into a boat; along the bottom of which they are finally laid, and held fast—as if they had fallen into the jaws of those terrible *tintorerias*, they so lately looked at keeping company with the ship!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCUTTLERS.

HARRY BLEW is in the hold, Bill Davis beside him.

They are standing on the bottom-timbers on a spot they have selected for their wicked work, and which they have had some difficulty in finding. They have reached it, by clambering over sandalwood logs, cases of Manilla cigars, and piles of tortoise-shell. Clearing some of these articles out of the way, they get sight of the vessel's ribs, and at a point they know to be under the water-line. They know also that a hole bored between their feet, though ever so small, will in due time fill the barque's hold with water, and send her to the bottom of the sea.

Davis, auger in hand, stands in readiness to bore the hole; waiting for the first-officer to give the word.

But something stays the latter from giving it, as the former from commencing the work.

It is a thought that seems to occur simultaneously to both, bringing their eyes up to one another's faces, in a glance mutually interrogative. Blew is the first to put it in speech.

“Dang me, if I like to do it!”

“Ye've spoke my mind exact, Mr. Blew!” rejoins Davis. “No more do I.”

“'Tan't nothing short of murder,” pursues the chief-mate. “An' that's just why I an't up to it; the more, as there an't any downright necessity. As I sayed to them above, I can see no good reason for sinking the ship. She'd sail right out, an' we'd never hear word o' her again. An' if them to be left 'board o' her shud get picked up, what matters that to us? We'll be out o' the way, long afore they could go anywhere to gie evidence against us. Neer a fear o' their ever findin' us—neyther you nor me, anyhow. I dare say, Davis, you mean to steer for some port, where we're not likely to meet any more

Spaniards. I do, when I've stowed my share o' the plunder."

"Yes; I'm for Australia, soon 's I can get there. That's the place for men like me."

"There you'll be safe enough. So I, where I intend goin'. And we'll both feel better, not havin' a ugly thing to reflect back on. Which we would, if we send these three poor creeturs to Davy's locker. Now, I propose to you what you heerd me say to the rest: let's gie them a chance for their lives."

"And not do this?"

As he puts the question, Davis points his auger to the bottom of the ship.

"There an't no need—not a morsel o' good can come from sinkin' her. And not a bit harm in lettin' her slip."

"What will the others say?"

"They won't know anything about it—they can't unless we tell 'em. And we won't be the fools to do that. As I argied to them, with the wind off-shore, as 'tis now, she'll scud out o' sight o' land

long afore daylight. Bill Davis! whatsoever the others may do, or think they're doin', let's me an' you keep our consciences clear o' this foul deed. Believe me, mate, we'll both feel better for 't some day."

"If you think they won't know, I'm agreed."

"How can they? There an't none o' them to see what we do down here. 'Tain't likely there's any listener. Gie a knock or two wi' the mallet!"

The ship's carpenter obeying, strikes several blows against an empty water-cask, the noise ascending through the open hatch. He suspends his strokes at hearing exclamations above; then screams in the shrill treble of female voices.

"You see they're not thinking o' us," says the mate. "Them Spaniards are too busy about their own share o' the job. They're gettin' the girls into the boat."

"Yes; that's what they're doing."

"Sweet girls both be. An't they, Davis?"

"Ay, that they are; a pair of reg'lar beauties."

“Look here, shipmate! Since we’ve settled this other thing, I want to say a word about them, too, and I may’s well say it now. Gomez and that land-lubber, Hernandez, are layin’ claim to them, as if they had a right. Now they haven’t, no more than any o’ the rest o’ us. Some others may have fancies, too. I confess to havin’ a weakness for the one wi’ the copper-coloured hair, which is she as Gil Gomez wants to ’appropriate. I made no objection to his takin’ her into the boat. But soon’s we get ashore, I intend to stan’ out for my rights to that little bit o’ property, which are just as good as his. Do you feel like backin’ me?”

“Hang me, if I don’t! I’m myself a bit sweet upon the dark ’un, and have been, ever since settin’ eyes on her. And though I’ve said nothing, like yourself, I wasn’t going to give that point up, before having a talk about it. You say the word—I’ll stan’ by you. And if it comes to fightin’, I’ll make short work with that bandy-legged chap Hernandez, the one as wants her.

We can count on Jack Striker on our side; and most like the Dane and Dutchman; La Crosse for certain. Frenchy don't cotton to them Spaniards, ever since his quarrel with Padilla. But, as you say, let's go in for the girls, whether or not. You can claim the light-haired. I'm for the dark one, an' damned if I an't ready to fight for her—to the death!"

"As I for the other!" exclaims the ex-man-o'-war, in eager serious earnest.

"But what's to be done after we go ashore?" asks Davis. "That's what's been bothering me. We're about to land in a strange country, but where these Spanish chaps will be at home, speakin' the lingo, an'll so have the advantage of us. There's a difficulty. Can you see a way out of it?"

"Clearly."

"How?"

"Because the girls don't care for eyther o' the two as are layin' claim to them. Contrarywise, they hate 'em both. I've knowd that all along. So, if we get 'em out o' their clutches—at the same time

givin' the girls a whisper about protectin' them— they'll go willinly 'long wi' us. Afterwards, we can act accordin' to the chances that turn up. Only swear you'll stan' by me, Bill, an' wi' Striker to back us, we'll bring things right."

"I'm bound to stan' by you; so 'll Jack, I'm sure. Hark! that's him, now! He's calling to us. By G—, I believe they're in the boat!"

"They are! Let's hurry up! Just possible them Spaniards may take it into their heads— Quick, shipmate! Heave after me!"

With this, Blew holds out the lantern to light them up the hatch, both making as much haste to reach the deck as if their lives depended upon speed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BARQUE ABANDONED.

WHILE the scuttlers are shirking their work in the *Condor's* hold, and simultaneous with the abduction on deck, a scene is transpiring in her cabin, which might be likened to a saturnalia of demons.

The skipper and Don Gregorio, sitting over their walnuts and wine, are startled by the sound of footsteps descending the stair. As they are heavy and hurried, bearing no resemblance to the gentle tread of woman—it cannot be the ladies coming down again. Nor yet the negro cook, since his voice is heard above in angry expostulation. Two of the sailors have just seized him in his galley, throttled him back on the bench, and are there lashing him with a piece of log-line.

They at the cabin table know nothing of this.

They hear his shouts, and now also the shrieks of the young girls; but have no time to take any steps, as at that instant the cuddy-door is dashed open, and several men come rushing in; the second-mate at their head. Lantanas, sitting with his face to the door, sees them first; Don Gregorio, turning in his seat, the instant after.

Neither thinks of demanding a reason for the rude intrusion. The determined air of the intruders, with the fierce expression on their faces, tells it would be idle.

In a time shorter than it takes to tell it, the two doomed men are made fast to the stanchioned chairs; where they sit bolt upright, firm as bollard heads. But not in silence. Both utter threats, oaths, angry fulminations.

Not for long are they allowed this freedom of speech. One of the sailors, seizing a pair of nutcrackers, thrusts them between the skipper's teeth, gagging him. Another, with a corkscrew, does the like for Don Gregorio.

Then the work of pillage proceeds. The locker

lids are forced, and the boxes of gold-dust dragged out.

Several goings and comings are required for its transport to the pinnace; but at length it is stowed in the boat, the plunderers taking their seats beside it.

One lingers in the cabin behind the rest; that fiend in human shape who has all along counselled killing the unfortunate men.

Left alone with them, helpless, and at his mercy, he looks as if still determined to do this. It is not from any motive of compassion that he goes from one to the other, and strikes the gags from between their teeth. For at the same time he apostrophizes them in horrid mockery :

“ *Carramba !* I can't think of leaving two gentlemen seated at such a well-furnished table, and no end of wine, without being able to hob-nob, and drink one another's health ! ”

Then, specially addressing himself to Lantanas, he continues :

“ You see, captain, I'm not spiteful ; else I

shouldn't think of showing you this bit of civility, after the insults you've offered me, since I've been second-officer of your ship."

After which, turning angrily upon Don Gregorio, and going close up, he shrieks into his ears :

"Perhaps you don't know me, Montijo? Can your worship recall a circumstance that occurred some six years ago, when you were *alcalde-mayor* of Yerba Buena? You may remember having a poor fellow pilloried, and whipped, for doing a bit of contraband. I was that unfortunate individual. And this is my satisfaction for the indignity you put upon me. Keep your seats, gentlemen! Drink your wine, and eat your walnuts. Before you've cleared the table, this fine barque, with your noble selves, will be at the bottom of the sea."

The ruffian concludes with a peal of scornful laughter; continued as he ascends the cabin stair, after striding out and banging the door behind him!

On deck, he sees himself alone; and hurrying to the ship's waist, scrambles over the side, down into the boat; where he finds everything stowed, the oarsmen seated on the thwarts, their oars in the rowlocks, ready to shove off.

They are not all there yet. Two—the first-mate and Davis are still aboard the barque—down in her hold.

There are those who would gladly cast loose, and leave the laggards behind. Indeed, soon as stepping into the boat, Padilla proposes it, the other Spaniards abetting him.

But their traitorous desire is opposed by Striker. However otherwise debased, the ex-convict is true to the men who speak his own tongue.

He protests in strong determined language, and is backed by the Dutchman, Dane, and La Crosse, as also Tarry and Slush.

“Bah!” exclaims Padilla, seeing himself in the minority; “I was only jesting. Of course, I had no intention to abandon them. Ha, ha, ha!”

he adds with a forced laugh, "we'd be the blackest of traitors to behave that way."

Striker pays no heed to the hypocritical speech, but calls to his old chum, and Harry Blew—alternately pronouncing their names.

He gets response, and soon after sees Davis above, clambering over the rail.

Blew is not far behind, but still does not appear. He is by the foot of the mainmast with a haulyard in his hands, as though hoisting something aloft. The moon has become clouded, and it is too dark for any one to see what it is. Besides, there is no one observing him—no one could, the bulwarks being between.

"Hillo, there, Blew!" again hails Striker; "what be a-keepin' ye? Hurry down! These Spanish chaps are threetnin' to go off without ye."

"Hang it!" exclaims the chief-mate, now showing at the side; "I hope that an't true!"

"Certainly not!" exclaims Padilla; "nothing of the kind. We were only afraid you might

delay too long, and be in danger of going down with the vessel."

"Not much fear of that," returns Blew, dropping into the boat. "It'll be some time afore she sinks. Ye fixed the rudder for her to run out, didn't ye?"

"Ay, ay!" responds he who was the last at the wheel.

"All right; shove off, then! That wind'll take the old *Condor* straight seawart; an' long afore sunrise, she'll be out sight o' land. Give way there—way!"

The oars dip and splash. The boat separates from the side, with prow turned shoreward.

The barque, with her sails still spread, is left to herself, and the breeze, which wafts her gently away towards the wide wilderness of ocean.

Proceeding cautiously, guarding against the rattle of an oar in its rowlock, the pirates run their boat through the breakers, and approach the shore. Right ahead are the two summits, with

the moon just going down behind; and between is a cove of horse-shoe shape, the cliffs extending around it.

With a few more strokes the boat is brought into it, and glides on to its innermost end.

As the keel grates upon the shingly strand, their ears are saluted by a chorus of cries—the alarm signal of sea-birds, startled by the intrusion; among them the scream of the harpy eagle, resembling the laugh of a maniac.

These sounds, despite their discordance, are sweet to those now hearing them. They tell of a shore uninhabited—literally, that the “coast is clear”—just as they wish it.

Beaching the boat, they bound on shore, and lift their captives out; then the spoils—one unresisting as the other.

Some go in search of a place where they may pass the night; for it is too late to think of proceeding inland.

Between the strand and the cliff's base, these

discover a bench, several feet above sea-level, having an area of over an acre, covered with coarse grass; just the spot for a camping-place.

As the sky has become clouded, and threatens a downpour of rain, they carry thither the boat's sail, intending to rig it up as an awning.

But a discovery is made which spares them the trouble. Along its base, the cliff is honeycombed with caves, one of ample dimensions, sufficient to shelter the whole crew. A ship's lamp, which they have brought with them, when lighted, throws its glare upon stalactites, that sparkle like the pendants of chandeliers.

Disposing themselves in various attitudes, some reclined on their spread pilot-coats, some seated on stones or canvas bags, they enter upon a debauch with the wines abstracted from the stores of the abandoned barque—drinking, talking, singing, shouting, and swearing, till the cavern rings with their hellish revelry. It is well their captives

are not compelled to take part in, or listen to, it. To them has been appropriated one of the smaller grottoes, the boat-sail fixed in front securing them privacy. Harry Blew has done this. In the breast of the British man-o'-war's man there is still a spark of delicacy. Though his gratitude has given way to the greed of gold, he has not yet sunk to the level of that ruffianism around him.

While the carousal is thus carried on within the cave, without, the overcast sky begins to discharge itself. Lightning forks and flashes athwart the firmament; thunder rolls reverberating along the cliffs; a strong wind sweeps them; the rain pouring down in torrents.

It is a tropic storm—short-lived, lasting scarce half an hour.

But, while on, it lashes the sea into fury, driving the breakers upon the beach, where the boat has been left loosely moored.

In the reflux of the ebbing tide, this is set afloat and carried away seaward. Driven then

upon the coral reef, it bilges, is broken to pieces, when the fragments, as waifs, dance about, and drift far away over the foam-crested billows.

CHAPTER X.

TWO TARQUINS.

It is after midnight. A calm has succeeded the storm; and silence reigns around the cove where the pirates have put in. The sea-birds have returned to their perches on the cliff, and now sit noiselessly—save an occasional angry scream from the osprey, as a whip-poor-will, or some other plumed plunderer of the night, flits past his place of repose, near enough to wake the tyrant of the sea-shore, and excite his jealous rage.

Other sounds are the dull boom of the outside breakers, and the lighter ripple of the tidal wave washing over a strand rich in shells.

Now and then, a *manatee*, raising its bristled snout above the surf, gives out a low, prolonged wail, like the moan of some creature in mortal agony.

But there is no human voice now. The ruffians have ended their carousal. Their profane songs, ribald jests, and drunken cachinnations, inharmoniously mingling with the soft monotone of the sea, have ceased to be heard. They lie a stretch along the cavern floor, its hollow aisles echoing back their snores and stertorous breathing.

Still, they are not all asleep, nor all within the cavern. Two are outside, sauntering along the shadow of the cliff. As the moon has also gone down, it is too dark to distinguish their faces. Still, there is light enough reflected from the luminous surface of the sea to show that neither is in sailor garb, but the habiliments of landmen — this the national costume of Spanish California. On their heads are *sombreros* of ample brim; wide trousers — *calzoneras* — flap loose around their ankles; while over their shoulders they carry cloaks, which, by the peculiar drape, are recognizable as Mexican *mangas*. In the obscurity, the colour of these cannot be determined; though one is scarlet, the other sky blue.

Apparelled as the two men are now, it would be difficult to identify them as Gil Gomez and Jose Hernandez. For all it is they.

They are strolling about without fear, or thought of any one observing them. Yet one is; a man, who has come out of the larger cavern, just after them, and who follows them along the cliff's base. Not openly or boldly, as designing to join in their deliberation; but crouchingly and by stealth, as if playing spy on them.

He is in sailor togs, wearing a loose dread-nought coat, which he buttons on coming out of the cavern. But before closing it over his breast, the butt of a pistol, and the handle of a knife, could be seen gleaming there, both stuck behind a leathern waist belt.

On first stepping forth, he stands for a time with eyes fixed upon the other two. He can see them but indistinctly; while they cannot see him at all, his figure making no silhouette against the dark disc of the cave's mouth. And afterwards, as he moves along the cliff, keeping close in, its

shadow effectually conceals him from their view. But still safer is he from being observed by them, after having ensconced himself in a cleft of rock ; which he does while their backs are turned upon him.

In the obscure niche he now occupies no light falls upon his face—not a ray. If there did, it would disclose the countenance of Harry Blew ; and as oft before, with an expression upon it not easily understood. But no one sees, much less makes attempt to interpret it.

Meanwhile the two saunterers come to a stop and stand conversing. It is Gomez who is first heard saying :

“ I’ve been thinking, *compañero*, now we’ve got everything straight so far, that our best plan will be to stay where we are till the other matter’s fixed.”

“ What other are you speaking of ? ”

“ The marrying, of course.”

“ Oh ! that. Well ? ”

“ We can send on for the *padre*, and bring him

here ; or failing him, the *cura*. To tell truth, I haven't the slightest idea of where we've come ashore. We may be a goodish distance from Santiago ; and to go there, embargoed as we are, there's a possibility of our being robbed of our pretty baggage on the route. You understand me ? ”

“ I do ! ”

“ Against risk of that kind, it is necessary we should take precautions. And the first—as also the best I can think of—is to stay here, till we're spliced. One of our two Californian friends can act as a messenger. Either, with six words I shall entrust to him, will be certain to bring back an ecclesiastic, having full powers to perform the flea-bite of a ceremony. Then we can march inland without fear—ay, with flying colours ; both Benedicts, our blushing brides on our arms ; and in Santiago spend a pleasant honeymoon.”

“ Delightful anticipation ! ”

“ Just so. And for that very reason, we

mustn't risk marring it; which we might, by travelling as simple bachelors. So I say, let us get married before going a step farther."

"But the others? Are they to assist at our nuptials?"

"Certainly not."

"In what way can it be avoided?"

"The simplest in the world. It's understood that we divide our plunder the first thing in the morning. When that's done, and each has packed up his share, I intend proposing that we separate—every one to go his own gait."

"Will they agree to that, think you?"

"Of course they will. Why shouldn't they? It's the safest way for all, and they'll see that. Twelve of us trooping together through the country—to say nothing of having the women along—the story we're to tell about shipwreck might get discredited. When that's made clear to our old shipmates, they'll be considerate for their own safety. Trust me for making it clear. Of course we'll keep our Californian friends to

act as groomsmen ; so that the only things wanted will be a brace of bridesmaids."

"Ha, ha, ha !" laughs Hernandez.

"And now to see about our brides. We've not yet proposed to them. We went once to do that, and were disappointed. Not much danger of that now."

"For all that, we may count upon a flat refusal."

"Flat or sharp, little care I. And it won't signify, one way or the other. In three days, or less, I intend calling Carmen Montijo my wife. But come on ! I long to lay my hand, and heart, at her feet."

Saying which Gomez strides on towards the grotto, the other by his side, like two Tarquins about to invade the sleep of virginal innocence.

CHAPTER XI.

WITHIN THE GROTTO.

THOUGH the grotto is in darkness, its occupants are not asleep. To them repose is impossible; for they are that moment in the midst of anguish, keen as human heart could feel. They have passed through its first throes, and are for the while a little calmer. But it is the tranquillity of deep deadening grief, almost despair. They mourn him dearest to them as dead.

Nor have they any doubt of it. [How could they. While in the boat, they heard their captors speak about the scuttling of the ship, well knowing what they meant. Long since has she gone to the bottom of the sea, with the living left aboard, or perhaps only their lifeless bodies; for they may have been murdered before! No matter now in what way death came to them.

Enough of sadness and horror to think it has come—enough for the bereaved ones to know they are bereft.

Nor do they need telling why it has all been done. Though hindered from seeing while in the boat, they have heard. Cupidity the cause; the crime a scheme to plunder the ship. Alas! it has succeeded.

But all is not yet over. Would that it were! There is something still to come; something they fear to reflect upon, or speak of to one another. What is to be their own fate?

Neither can tell, or guess. Their thoughts are too distracted for reasoning. But in the midst of vague visions, one assumes a shape too well-defined. It is the same of which Carmen was speaking when seized.

She again returns to it, saying:

“Iñez, I’m now almost sure we are not in the hands of strangers. From what has happened, and some voices we heard, I fear my suspicions have been too true!”

“Heaven help us, if it be so!”

“Yes; Heaven help us! Even from pirates we might have expected some mercy; but none from them. *Ay de mi!* what will become of us?”

The interrogatory is only answered by a sigh. The spirit of the Andalusian girl, habitually cheerful, is now crushed under a weight of very wretchedness. Soon again they exchange speech, seeking counsel of one another. Is there no hope, no hand to help, no one to whom they may turn in this hour of dread ordeal? No—not one! Even the English sailor, in whom they had trusted, has proved untrue; to all appearance, chief of the conspiring crew! Every human being seems to have abandoned them. Has God?

“Let us pray to Him!” says Carmen.

“Yes,” answers Iñez; “He only can help us now.”

They kneel side by side on the hard, cold floor of the cave, and send up their voices in earnest

prayer. They first entreat the Holy Virgin that the life of him dear to them may yet be spared ; then invoke her protection for themselves, against a danger both dread as death itself. They pray in trembling accents, but with a fervour eloquent through fear.

Solemnly pronouncing “ Amen ! ” they make the sign of the cross ; in darkness, God alone seeing it.

As their hands drop down from the gesture, and while they are still in a kneeling attitude, a noise outside succeeds their appeal to Heaven, suddenly recalling them to earthly thoughts and fears.

They hear voices of men in conversation ; at the same time the sail-cloth is pushed aside, and two men press past it into the cave. Soon as entering, one says :

“ *Señoritas !* We must ask pardon for making our somewhat untimely call ; which present circumstances render imperative. It’s to be hoped, however, you won’t stand upon such stiff ceremony

with us, as when we had the honour of last paying our respects to you."

After this singular peroration, the speaker pauses to see what may be the effect of his words. As this cannot be gathered from any reply—since none is vouchsafed—he continues :

"Doña Carmen Montijo, you and I are old acquaintances; though, it may be, you do not remember my voice. With the sound of the sea so long echoing in your ears, that's not strange. Perhaps the sense of sight will prove more effectual in recalling an old friend. Let me give you something to assist it!"

Saying this, he holds out a lantern, hitherto concealed beneath his cloak. As it lights up the grotto, four figures are seen erect; for the girls have sprung to their feet in apprehension of immediate danger. Upon all, the light shines clear; and, fronting her, Carmen Montijo sees—too surely recognizing it—the face of Francisco de Lara; while in her *vis-à-vis*, Iñez Alvarez beholds Faustino Calderon!

Yes, before them are their scorned suitors ; no longer disguised in sailor garb, but resplendent in their Californian costume—the same worn by them on that day of their degradation, when De Lara rolled in the dust of the Dolores road.

Now that he has them in his power, his triumph is complete ; and in strains of exultation he continues :

“ So, ladies ! you see we’ve come together again ! No doubt you’re a little surprised at our presence, but I hope not annoyed.”

There is no reply to this taunting speech.

“ Well, if you won’t answer, I shall take it for granted you *are* annoyed ; besides looking a little alarmed too. You’ve no need to be that.”

“ No, indeed,” endorses Calderon. “ We mean you no harm—none whatever.”

“ On the contrary,” goes on De Lara, “ only good. We’ve nothing but favours to offer you.”

“ Don Francisco de Lara ! ” exclaims Carmen, at length breaking silence, and speaking in a tone of piteous expostulation ; “ And you, Don

Faustino Calderon ! why have you committed this crime ? What injury have we ever done you ? ”

“ Come ! not so fast, fair Carmen ! Crime’s a harsh word, and we’ve not committed any as yet—nothing to speak of.”

“ No crime ! *Santissima !* My father—my poor father ! ”

“ Don’t be uneasy about him. He’s safe enough.”

“ Safe ! Dead ! Drowned ! *Dios de mi alma !* ”

“ No, no. That’s all nonsense,” protests the fiend, adding falsehood to his sin of deeper dye. “ Don Gregorio is not where you say. Instead of being at the sea’s bottom, he is sailing upon its surface ; and is likely to be, for Heaven knows how long. But let’s drop that subject of the past, which seems unpleasant to you, and talk of the present—of ourselves. You ask what injury you’ve ever done us ? Faustino Calderon may answer for himself to the fair Iñez. To you, Doña Carmen, I shall make reply—— But we may as well confer privately.”

At this he lays hold of her wrist, and leads her aside ; Calderon conducting Iñez in the opposite direction.

When the whole length of the cavern is between the two pairs, De Lara resumes speech :

“ Yes, Doña Carmen ; you *have* done me an injury—a double wrong I may call it.”

“ How, sir ? ” she asks, withdrawing her hand from his, with a disdainful gesture.

“ How ? ” he retorts. “ Why, in making me love you—by leading me to believe my love returned.”

“ You speak falsely ; I never did so.”

“ You did, Doña Carmen ; you did. It is you who speak false, denying it. That is the first wrong I have to reproach you with. The second is in casting me off, as soon as you supposed you’d done with me. Not so, as you see now. We’re together again—never more to part till I’ve had satisfaction for all. I once hinted—I now tell you plainly, you’ve made a mistake in trifling with Francisco De Lara.”

“I never trifled with you, señor. *Dios mio!* What means this? Man—if you be a man—have mercy! Oh! what would you—what would you?”

“Nothing to call for such distracted behaviour on your part. On the contrary, I’ve brought you here—for I’ll not deny that it’s I who have done it—to grant you favours, instead of asking them. Ay, or even satisfying resentments. What I intend towards you, I hope you will appreciate. To shorten explanations—for which we’ve neither opportunity nor time—I want you for my wife—*want you, and will have you.*”

“*Your wife!*”

“Yes; *my* wife. You needn’t look surprised, nor counterfeit feeling it. And equally idle for you to make opposition. I’ve determined upon it. So, you must marry me.”

“Marry the murderer of my father! Sooner than do that, you shall also be mine. Wretch! I am in your power. You can kill me now.”

“I know all that, without your telling me.

But I don't intend killing you. On the contrary, I shall take care to keep you alive, until I've tried what sort of a wife you'll make. Should you prove a good one, and fairly affectionate, we two may lead a happy life together; notwithstanding the little unpleasantness that's been between us. If not, and our wedded bondage prove uncongenial, why, then, I may release you in the way you wish, or any other that seems suitable. After the honeymoon, you shall have your choice. Now, Doña Carmen! those are my conditions. I hope you find them fair enough?"

She makes no reply. The proud girl is dumb, partly with indignation, partly from the knowledge that all speech would be idle. But while angry to the utmost, she is also afraid—trembling at the alternative presented—death or dishonour; the last if she marry the murderer of her father; the first if she refuse him!

The ruffian repeats his proposal, in the same cynical strain, concluding it with a threat.

She is at length stung to reply; which she does

in but two words, twice repeated in wild despairing accent. They are :

“ Kill me—kill me ! ”

Almost at the same time, and in similar strain, does Iñez answer her cowardly suitor, who in a corner of the grotto has alike brought her to bay.

After the dual response, there is a short interval of silence. Then De Lara, speaking for both, says :

“ Señoritas ! we shall leave you now ; and you can go to sleep without fear of further solicitation. No doubt, after a night’s rest, you’ll awake to a more sensible view of matters in general, and the case as it stands. Of one thing be assured ; that there’s no chance of your escaping from your present captivity, unless by consenting to change your names. And if you don’t consent, they’ll be changed all the same. Yes, Carmen Montijo ! before another week passes over your head, you shall be addressed as Doña Carmen de Lara.”

“ And you, Iñez Alvarez, will be called Doña Iñez Calderon. No need for you to feel dis-

honoured by a name among the first in California. Noble as your own ; ay, or any in old Spain."

"*Hasta mañana, muchachas!*" salutes De Lara, preparing to take leave. "*Pasan Vs buena noche!*"

Calderon repeating the same formulary, the two step towards the entrance, lift up the piece of suspended sail-cloth, and pass out into the night. They have taken the lantern along with them, again leaving the grotto in darkness.

The girls grope their way, till their arms come in contact. Then, closing in mutual embrace, they sink together upon the cold flinty floor!

CHAPTER XII.

OCEANWARDS.

ANOTHER day dawns over the great South Sea. As the golden orb shows above the crest of the central American Cordillera, its beams scatter wide over the Pacific, as a lamp raised aloft, flashing its light afar. Many degrees of longitude receive instant illumination, at once turning night into day.

An observer looking west over that vast watery expanse, would see on its shining surface objects that gladdened not the eyes of Balboa. In his day, only the rude Indian *balza*, or frail *periagua*, afraid to venture out, stole timidly along the shore; but now huge ships, with broad white sails, and at rare intervals the long black hull of

a steamer, thick smoke vomited forth from her funnel, may be descried in an offing that extends to the horizon itself.

But not always may ships be seen upon it; for the commerce of the Pacific is slight compared with that of the Atlantic, and large vessels passing along the coast of Veragua are few and far between.

On this morning, however, one is observed, and but one; she not sailing coastwise, but standing out towards mid-ocean, as though she had just left the land.

As the ascending sun dispels the night darkness around her, she can be descried as a white fleck on the blue water, her spread sails seeming no bigger than the wings of a sea-gull. Still, through a telescope—supposing it in the hands of a seaman—she may be told to be a craft with polacca masts; moreover, that the sails on her mizzen are not square-set, but fore-and-aft, proclaiming her a barque. For she is one; and could the observer through his glass make out

the lettering upon her stern, he would read there her name, *El Condor*.

Were he transported aboard of her, unaware of what has happened, it would surprise him to find her decks deserted ; not even a man at the wheel, though she is sailing with full canvas spread, even to studding sails ; no living thing seen anywhere, save two monstrous creatures covered with rust-coloured hair—mocking counterfeits of humanity.

Equally astonished would he be at finding her fore-castle abandoned ; sailors' chests with the lids thrown open, and togs lying loose around them ! Nor would it lessen his astonishment to glance into the galley, and there behold a black man sitting upon its bench, who does not so much as rise to receive him ! Nor yet, descending her cabin stair, to see a table profusely spread, at either end a guest, alike uncourteous in keeping their seats, on the faces of both an expression of agonized despair ! And all this might be seen on board the Chilian barque, on the morning

after abandonment by her traitorous and piratical crew.

A wretched night has it been for the three unfortunate men left in her, more especially the two constrained to sit at her cabin-table. For both have other thoughts, more bitter than their confinement; enough to fill the cup of their misery to the very brim. A dread anguished night for the ex-haciendado. Not because of having seen his treasure, the bulk of his fortune, borne off before his eyes; but from the double shriek which, at that same instant, reached him from the deck, announcing the seizure of things more dear. His daughter and granddaughter were then made captive; and, from their cries suddenly ceasing, he dreaded something worse—fearing them stifled by death. Reminded of an event in Yerba Buena, as also recognizing the ruffian who taunted him, made it the more probable that such had been their fate. He almost wished it; he would rather that, than a doom too horrible to think of.

The first-mate? He must have been killed too; butchered while endeavouring to defend them? The unsuspecting captain could not think of his chief-officer having gone against him; and how could Don Gregorio believe the man so recommended, turning traitor?

While they were thus charitably judging him, they received a crushing response; hearing his voice among the mutineers—not in expostulation, or opposed, but as if taking part with them! One, Striker, called out his name, to which he answered; and, soon after, other speeches from his lips sounded clear through the cabin windows, open on that mild moonlit night.

Still listening, as they gazed in one another's face with mute astonishment, they heard a dull thud against the ship's side—the stroke of a boat-hook as the pinnace was shoved off—then a rattle, as the oars commence working in the tholes, succeeded by the plash of the oar-blades in the water. After that, the regular “dip-dip,” at length dying away, as

the boat receded, leaving the abandoned vessel silent as a graveyard in the mid-hour of night.

Seated with face towards the cuddy windows, Don Gregorio could see through them, and as the barque's bow rose on the swell, depressing her stern, he commanded a view of the sea outside.

There, upon its calm clear surface, he made out a dark object moving away. It was a boat filled with forms, the oar-blades rising and falling in measured stroke, flashing the phosphorescence on both sides. No wonder at his earnest look—his gaze of concentrated anguish! That boat held all that was dear to him—bearing that all away, he knows not whither, to a fate he dare not reflect upon. He could trace the outlines of land beyond, and perceive that the boat was being rowed for it, the barque at the same time sailing seaward, each instant widening the distance between them. But for a long while he could distinguish the black speck with luminous jets on either side, as the oar-blades intermittently rose

and fell, till at length, entering within the shadow of the land, he lost sight of it.

“Gone! all gone!” groaned the bereaved father, his beard drooping down to his breast, his countenance showing he has surrendered up his soul to despair! So, too, Lantanas.

Then both ceased struggling and shouting, alike convinced of the idleness of such demonstrations. The chief-officer a mutineer, so must all the others; and all had forsaken the ship. No; not all! There is one remains true, and who is still on her—the black cook. They heard his voice, though not with any hope. It came from a distant part of the ship in cries betokening distress. They could expect no help from him. He was either disabled, or, as themselves, fast bound.

Throughout the night they heard it; the intervals between becoming longer, the voice fainter, till he also, yielding to despair, was silent.

As the morning sun shines in through the

stern windows, Don Gregorio can see they are out of sight of land. Only sea and sky are visible to him; but neither to Lantanas, whose face is the other way; so fastened he cannot even turn his head.

The barque is scudding before a breeze, which bears her still farther into the great South Sea; on whose broad bosom she might beat for weeks, months—ay, till her timbers rot—without sighting ship, or being herself descried by human eye. Fearful thought — appalling prospect to those constrained to sit at her cabin-table!

With that before their minds, the morning light brings no joy. Instead, it but intensifies their misery. For they are now sure they have no chance of being rescued.

They sit haggard in their chairs—for no sleep has visited the eyes of either—like men who have been all night long engaged in a drunken debauch.

Alas! how different! The glasses of wine before them are no longer touched, nor the

fruits tasted. Neither the bouquet of the one, nor the perfume of the other, has any charm for them now. Either is as much beyond their reach, as if a thousand miles off, instead of on a table between them !

Gazing in one another's faces, they at times fancy it a dream. They can scarcely bring themselves to realize such a situation ! Who could ? The rude intrusion of the ruffian crew—the rough handling they have had—the breaking open of the lockers—and the boxes of gold borne off—all seem but the phantasmagoria of some horrible vision !

CHAPTER XIII.

PARTITIONING THE SPOIL.

THE same sun that shines upon the abandoned barque lights up the men who abandoned her, still on that spot where they came ashore. As the first rays fall over the cliff's crest, they show a cove of semicircular shape, backed by a beetling precipice. A ledge or dyke, sea-washed, and weed-covered, trends across its entrance, with a gate-like opening in the centre, through which, at high tide, the sea sweeps in, though never quite up to the base of the cliff. Between this and the strand lies the elevated platform already spoken of, accessible from above by a sloping ravine, the bed of a stream running only when it rains. As said, it is only an acre or so in extent,

and occupying the inner concavity of the semi-circle. The beach is not visible from it, this concealed by the dry reef which runs across it as the chord of an arc. Only a small portion of it can be seen through the portal which admits the tidal flow. Beyond, stretches the open sea outside the surf, with the breakers more than a mile off.

Such is the topography of the place where the mutineers have made landing and passed the night. When the day dawns, but little is there seen to betray their presence. Only a man seated upon a stone, nodding as if asleep, at intervals awakening with a start, and grasping at a gun between his legs; soon letting it go, and again giving way to slumber, the effects of that drunken debauch kept up to a late hour. He would be a poor sentinel were there need for vigilance.

Seemingly, there is none. No enemy is near—no human being in sight; the only animate objects some sea-birds, that, winging their way along the face of the cliff, salute him with an

occasional scream, as if incensed by his presence in a spot they deem sacred to themselves.

The sun fairly up, he rises to his feet, and walks towards the entrance of the larger cavern; then stopping in front of it, cries out:

“Inside there, shipmates! Sun’s up—time to be stirring!”

Seeing him in motion, and hearing his hail, the gulls gather, and swoop around his head in continuous screaming. In larger numbers, and with cries more strident, as his comrades come forth out of the cave, one after another—yawning, and stretching their arms.

The first, looking seaward, proposes to refresh himself by a plunge in the surf; and for this purpose starts toward the beach. The others, taken with the idea, follow in twos and threes, till in a string all are *en route* for the strand.

To reach this, it is necessary for them to pass through the gap in the transverse ledge; which the tide, now at ebb, enables them to do.

He who leads, having gone through it, on

getting a view of the shore outside, suddenly stops ; as he does so, sending back a shout. It is a cry of surprise, followed by the startling announcement :

“ The boat’s gone ! ”

This should cause them apprehension ; and would, if they but knew the consequences. Ignorant of these, they make light of it, one saying :

“ Let her go, and be d——d ! We want no boats now.”

“ A horse would be more to our purpose,” suggests a second ; “ or, for that matter, a dozen.”

“ A dozen donkeys would do,” adds a third, accompanying his remark with a horse-laugh. “ It’ll take about that many to pack our possibles.”

“ What’s become of the old pinnace, anyhow ? ” asks one in sober strain ; as, having passed through the rock-portal, they stand scanning the strand. All remember the place where they left the boat ; and see it is not there.

“Has any one made away with it?”

The question is asked, and instantly answered, several saying, no. Striker, the man who first missed it, vouchsafes the explanation.

“The return tide’s taken it out; an’ I dar say, it’s broke to bits on them theer breakers.”

They now remember it was not properly moored, but left with painter loose; and do not wonder it went adrift. They care little, indeed nothing, and think of it no longer; but, stripping, plunge into the surf.

After bathing to their hearts’ content, they return to the cavern, and array themselves in garments befitted to the life they intend leading. Their tarry togs are cast off, to be altogether abandoned; for each has a suit of shore clothes, brought away from the barque.

Every one rigged out in his own peculiar style, and breakfast despatched, they draw together to deliberate on a plan of future action. But first the matter of greatest moment—the partition of the spoils.

It is made in little time, and with no great trouble. The boxes are broken open, and the gold-dust measured out in a pannikin; a like number of measures apportioned to each.

In money value no one can tell the exact amount of his share. Enough satisfaction to know it is nigh as much as he can carry.

After each has appropriated his own, they commence packing up, and preparing for the inland journey. And next arises the question, what way are they to go?

They have already resolved to strike for the city of Santiago; but in what order should they travel? Separate into several parties, or go all together?

The former plan, proposed by Gomez, is supported by Padilla, Hernandez, and Velarde. Gomez gives his reasons. Such a large number of pedestrians along roads where none save horsemen are ever seen, could not fail to excite surprise. It might cause inconvenient questions to be asked them—perhaps lead to their

being arrested, and taken before some village *alcalde*. And what story could they tell ?

On the other hand, there will be the chance of coming across Indians ; and as those on the Veraguan coast are ranked among the " bravos "—having preserved their independence, and along with it their instinctive hostility to the whites—an encounter with them might be even more dangerous than with any *alcalde*. Struggling along in squads of two or three, they would run a risk of getting captured, or killed, or scalped—perhaps all three.

This is the suggestion of Harry Blew, Striker and Davis alone favouring his view. All the others go against it, Gomez ridiculing the idea of danger from red men ; at the same time enlarging on that to be apprehended from white ones.

As the majority have more reason to fear civilized man than the so-called savage, it ends in their deciding for separation. They can come together again in Santiago if they choose it ; or not,

should chance for good or ill so determine. They are all now amply provided for playing an independent part in the drama of life ; and with this pleasant prospect, they may part company without a sigh of regret.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TENDER SUBJECT.

THE pirates having definitively settled the mode of making their inland journey, there is a short interregnum; during which most of those ready for the road stand idling, one or two still occupied in equipping themselves.

La Crosse has been sent up the ravine, to report how things look landward.

The four Spaniards have signified their intention to remain a little longer on the ground; while the three Englishmen have not said when they will leave. These are together conferring in low voice; but with an earnestness in their eyes—especially Blew's—which makes it easy to guess the subject. Only thoughts of woman could kindle these fiery glances.

Soon all appear ready to depart. Still no one stirs from the spot. For there is something yet : still another question to be determined ; to most of them a matter of little, though to some of all consequence.

In the latter light, two at least regard it ; since with them it has been the source, the primary motive, the real spur to all their iniquitous action. In a word, it is the women.

The captives : how are they to be disposed of ?

They are still within the grotto, unseen, as the sail-cloth curtains it. Breakfast has been taken to them, which they have scarce touched.

And, now, the time has come for deciding what has to be done with them ; no one openly asks, or says word upon the subject ; though it is uppermost in the thoughts of all. It is a delicate question, and they are shy of broaching it. For, there is a sort of tacit impression, there will be difficulty about the appropriation of this portion of the spoils—an electricity in the air, that foretells dispute and danger. All along it had been

understood that two men laid claim to them; their claim, whether just or not, hitherto unquestioned, or, at all events, uncontested. These, Gomez and Hernandez. As they had been the original designers of the supposed deed, now done, their confederates, men little given to love-making, had either not thought about the women, or deemed their possession of secondary importance. But now, at the eleventh hour, it has become known that two others intend asserting a claim to them—one being Blew, the other Davis.

And these two certainly seem so determined, their eyes constantly turning towards the grotto where the girls are, unconscious of the interest they are exciting.

At length the dreaded interrogatory is put—and point-blank. For it is Jack Striker who puts it. The “Sydney Duck” is not given to sentiment, or circumlocution.

Speaking that all may hear him, he blurts out :

“ Well, chums! what are we to do wi’ the weemen? ”

“ Oh! they,” answers Gomez in a drawling tone, and with an affectation of indifference. “ You’ve nothing to do with them; and needn’t take any trouble. They’ll go with us—with Señor Hernandez and myself.”

“ Will they, indeed? ” sharply questions the chief-officer.

“ Of course,” answers Gomez.

“ I don’t see any of course about it,” rejoins Blew. “ And more’n that, I tell ye they don’t go with ye—leastwise, not so cheap as you think for.”

“ What do you mean, Mr. Blew? ” demands the Spaniard, his eyes betraying anger, with some uneasiness.

“ No use you’re losin’ temper, Gil Gomez. You ain’t goin’ to scare me. So you may as well keep cool. By doin’ that, and listenin’, you’ll larn what I mean. The which is, that you and Hernandez have no more right to them creeturs

in the cave than any o' the rest of us. Just as the gold, so ought it to be wi' the girls. In coorse, we can't divide them all round ; but that's no reason why any two should take 'em, so long's any other two wants 'em as well. Now, *I* wants one o' them."

"And I another!" puts in Davis.

"Yes," continues Blew ; "and though I be a bit older than you, Mr. Gomez, and not quite so pretentious a gentleman, I can like a pretty wench as well's yerself. I've took a fancy to the one wi' the tortoise-shell hair, an' an't goin' to gie her up in the slack way you seem to be wishin'."

"Glad to hear it's the red one, Blew," says Davis. "As I'm for the black one, there'll be no rivalry between us. Her I mean to have—unless some better man hinders me."

"Well," interpolates Striker, "as 'twas me first put the questyun, I 'spose I'll be allowed to gie an opeenyun?"

No one saying nay, the ex-convict proceeds :

“As to any one hevin’ a speecial claim to them weemen, nobody has, an’ nobody shed have. ’Bout that, Blew’s right, an’ so’s Bill. An’ since the thing’s disputed, it oughter be settled in a fair an’ square——”

“You needn’t waste your breath,” interrupts Gomez, in a tone of determination. “I admit no dispute in the matter. If these gentlemen insist, there’s but one way of settling. First, however, I’ll say a word to explain. One of these ladies is my sweetheart—was, before I ever saw any of you. Señor Hernandez here can say the same of the other. Nay, I may tell you more; they are pledged to us.”

“It’s a lie!” cries Blew, confronting the slanderer, and looking him straight in the face. “A lie, Gil Gomez, from the bottom o’ your black heart!”

“Enough!” exclaims Gomez, now purple with rage. “No man can give Frank Lara the lie, and live after.”

“Frank Lara; or whatever you may call

yerself, I'll live long enough to see you under ground—or what's more like, hangin' high above it wi' your throat in a halter. Don't make any mistake about me. I can shoot straight as you."

"Avast theer!" shouts Striker to Gomez, now calling himself De Lara, seeing him about to draw a pistol. "Keep yer hand off o' that wepun! If theer must be a fight, let it be a fair one. But, before it begin, Jack Striker has a word to say."

While speaking, he has stepped between the two men, staying their encounter.

"Yes; let the fight be a fair one!" demand several voices, as the pirates come clustering around.

"Look here, shipmates!" continues Striker, still standing between the two angry men, and alternately eyeing them. "What's the use o' spillin' blood about it—maybe killin' one the other? All for the sake o' a pair o' petticoats, or a kuppel o' pairs, as it be. Take my advice, an' settle the thing in a pacifical way. Maybe ye

will, after ye've heerd what I intend proposin'; which I daresay 'll be satisfactory to all."

"What is it, Jack?" asks one of the outsiders.

"First, then, I'm agoin' to make the observashun, that fightin' an't the way to get them weemen, whoever's fools enough to fight for 'em. Theer's somethin' to be done besides."

"Explain yourself, old Sydney! What's to be done besides?"

"If the gals are goin' to be fought for, they've first got to be *paid* for."

"How that?"

"How? What humbuggin' stuff askin' such a questyin! Han't we all equil shares in 'em? Coorse we have. Tharfor, them as wants 'em, must pay for 'em. An' they as wants 'em so bad as to do shootin' for 'em, surely won't object to that. Theer appear to be four candydates in the field; an', kewrous enuf, they're set in pairs, two for each one o' the gals. Now, 'ithout referin' to any fightin' that's to be done—an', if they're

fools enuf to fight, let 'em—I say that eyther who eeventyally gits a gal, shed pay a considera-shin' o' gold-dust all roun' to the rest o' us—at the least a pannikin apiece. That's what Jack Striker proposes first."

"It's fair," says Slush.

"Nothing more than our rights," observes Tarry; the Dane and Dutchman also endorsing the proposal.

"I agree to it," says Harry Blew.

"I also," adds Davis.

De Lara—late Gomez—signifies his assent by a disdainful nod, but without saying a word; Hernandez imitating the action. In fear of losing adherents, neither dares disapprove of it.

"What more have have you to say, Jack?" asks Slush, recalling Striker's last words, which seemed to promise something else.

"Not much. Only thet I think it a pity, after our livin' so long in harmony thegither, we can't part same way. Weemen's allers been a bother ever since I've knowd em. An', I 'spose,

it'll continue so to the eend o' the chapter, an' the eend o' some lives heer. I repeet, thet it be a pity we shed hev to wind up wi' a quarrel wheer blood's bound to be spilt. Now, why can't it be settled 'ithout thet? I think I know o' a way."

"What way?"

"Leave it to the ladies theirselves. Gie them the chance o' who they'd like for their purtectors; same time lettin' 'em know they've got to choose 'tween one or t'other. Let 'em take their pick, everybody unnerstandin' afterwards, their's to be no quarrelin', or fightin'. That's our law in the Australyin bush, when we've cases o' the kind; an' every bushranger hes to 'bide by it. Why shedn't it be the same heer?"

"Why shouldn't it?" asks Slush. "It's a good law—just and fair for all."

"I consent to it," says Blew, with apparent reluctance, as if doubtful of the result, yet satisfied to submit to the will of the majority. "I mayent be neyther so young nor so good-lookin' as Mr. Gomez," he adds; "I know I an't eyther. Still

I'll take my chance. If she I lay claim to, pronounces against me, I promise to stand aside, and say neer another word—much less think o' fightin' for her. She can go 'long wi' him, an' my blessin' wi' both."

"Bravo, Blew! You talk like a good 'un. Don't be afraid; we'll stand by you!"

This, from several of the outsiders.

"Comrades!" says Davis, "I place myself in your hands. If my girl's against me, I'm willin' to give her up, same as Blew."

What about the other two? What answer will they make to the proposed peaceful compromise? All eyes are turned on them, awaiting it.

De Lara speaks first, his eyes flashing fire. Hitherto he has been holding his anger in check. but now it breaks out, poured forth like lava from a burning mountain.

"*Carajo!*" he cries. "I've been listening a long time to talk—taking it too coolly. Idle talk, all of it; yours, Mr. Striker, especially. What care we about your ways in the Australian bush. They

won't hold good here, or with me. My style of settling disputes 'is this, or this." He touches his pistol-butt; and then the hilt of a *macheté*, hanging by his side, adding: "Mr. Blew can have his choice."

"All right!" retorts the ex-man-o'-war's man. "I'm good for a bout with eyther, and don't care a toss which. Pistols at six paces, or my cutlass against that straight blade o' yours. Both if you like."

"Both be it. That's best, and will make the end sure. Get ready, and quick. For, sure as I stand here, I intend killing you!"

"Say, you intend tryin'. I'm ready to give you the chance. You can begin, soon 's you feel disposed."

"And I'm ready for *you*, sir," says Davis, confronting Hernandez. "Knives, pistols, toma-hawks—anything you like."

Hernandez hangs back, as though he would rather decline this combat *à outrance*.

"No, Bill!" interposes Striker; "one fight

at a time. When Blew an' Gomez hev got through wi' theirs, then you can gie t'other his change—if so be he care to hev it."

"T'other" appears gratified with Striker's speech, disregarding the innuendo. He had no thought it would come to this, and now looks as if he would surrender up his sweetheart without striking a blow. He makes no rejoinder; but shrinks back, cowed-like and craven.

"Yes; one fight at a time!" cry others, endorsing the dictum of Striker.

It is the demand of the majority, and the minority concedes it. All know it is to be a duel to the death. A glance at the antagonists—at their angry eyes, and determined attitudes—makes this sure. On that lonely shore one of the two—if not both—will sleep his last sleep!

CHAPTER XV.

A DUEL ADJOURNED.

THE combat, now declared inevitable, its preliminaries are speedily arranged. Under the circumstances, and between such adversaries, the punctilios of ceremony are slight. For theirs is the rough code of honour common to robbers of all countries and climes.

No seconds are chosen, nor spoken of. All on the ground are to act as such: and at once proceed to business.

Some measure off the distance, stepping it between two stones. Others examine the pistols, to see that both are loaded with ball-cartridge, and carefully capped. The fight is to be with Colt's six-shooters, navy size. Each combatant chances to have one of this particular pattern. They are to commence firing at twelve paces, and

if that be ineffectual, then close up, as either chooses. If neither fall to the shots, then to finish with the steel.

The captives inside the cave are ignorant of what is going on. Little dream they of the red tragedy soon to be enacted so near, or how much they themselves may be affected by its result. It is indeed to them the chances of a contrasting destiny.

The duellists take stand by the stones, twelve paces apart. Blew having stripped off his pilot-cloth coat, is in his shirt-sleeves. These rolled up to the elbow, expose ranges of tattooing, fouled anchors, stars, crescents, and a woman—a perfect medley of fore-castle souvenirs. They show also muscles, lying along his arms like lanyards round a ship's stay. Should the shots fail, those arms promise well for wielding the cutlass; and if his fingers should clutch his antagonist's throat, the struggle will be a short one.

Still, no weak adversary will he meet in Francisco de Lara. He, too, has laid aside his outer

garment—thrown off his scarlet cloak, and the heavy hat. He does not need stripping to the shirt-sleeves; his light *jaqueta* of velveteen in no way encumbers him. Fitting like a glove, it displays arms of muscular strength, with a body in symmetrical correspondence.

A duel between two such gladiators might be painful, but for all, a fearfully interesting spectacle. Those about to witness it seem to think so; as they stand silent, with breath bated, and eyes alternately on one and the other.

As it has been arranged that Striker is to give the signal, the ex-convict, standing centrally outside the line of fire, is about to say a word that will set two men, mad as tigers, at one another—each with full resolve to fire, cut down, and kill.

There is a moment of intense stillness, like the lull which precedes a storm. Nothing heard save the tidal wash against the near strand, the boom of the distant breakers, and at intervals the shrill scream of a sea-bird.

The customary "Ready" is forming on Striker's lips, to be followed by the "Fire!—one—two—three!" But not one of these words—not a syllable—is he permitted to speak. Before he can give utterance to the first, a cry comes down from the cliff, which arrests the attention of all; soon as understood, enchaining it.

It is La Crosse who sends it, shouting in accent of alarm,—

"Hola! camarades! we're on an island!"

* * * * *

When the forest is on fire, or the savannah swept by flood, and their wild denizens flee to a spot uninvaded, the timid deer is safe beside the fierce wolf or treacherous cougar. In face of the common danger they will stand trembling together—the beasts of prey for the time gentle as their victims.

So with human kind; a case parallel, and in point, furnished by the crew of the *Condor* with their captives.

The pirates, on hearing the cry of La Crosse, are at first only startled. But soon their surprise becomes apprehension; keen enough to stay the threatening fight, and indefinitely postpone it. For at the words "We're on an island," they are impressed with an instinctive sense of danger; and all, intending combatants as spectators, rush up the ravine, to the summit of the cliff, where La Crosse is still standing.

Arrived there, and casting their eyes inland, they have evidence of the truth of his statement. A strait, leagues in width, separates them from the mainland. Far too wide to be crossed by the strongest swimmer amongst them—too wide for them to be descried from the opposite side, even through a telescope! And the island is a mere strip of sea-washed rock, running parallel to the coast, cliff-bound, table-topped, sterile, treeless—and, to all appearance, waterless!

As this last thought comes uppermost—along with the recollection that their boat is gone—

what was at first only a flurry of excited apprehension, becomes a fixed fear.

Still further intensified, when after scattering over the islet, and exploring it from end to end, they again come together, and each party delivers its report. No wood save some stunted bushes ; no water—stream, pond, or spring ; only that of the salt sea rippling around ; no sign of animal life, except snakes, scorpions, and lizards, with the birds flying above—screaming as if in triumph at the intruders upon their domain being thus entrapped!

For they are so, and clearly comprehend it. Most of them are men who have professionally followed the sea, and understand what it is to be “castaways.” Some have had actual experience of it, and need no reminding of its dangers. To a man, they feel their safety as much compromised, as if the spot of earth under their feet, instead of being but three leagues from land—were three thousand—for that matter in the middle of the Pacific.

What would they not now give to be again on board the barque sent sailing thither to miserably perish? Ah! their cruelty has come back upon them like a curse.

The interrupted duel—what of it? Nothing. It is not likely ever to be fought. Between the *ci-devant* combatants, mad anger and jealous rivalry may still remain. But neither shows it now; both subdued, in contemplation of the common peril.

Blew, to all appearance, is less affected than his antagonist; but all are cowed—awed by a combination of occurrences, that look as though an avenging angel had been sent to punish them.

From that moment Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez will be safe in their midst, as if promenading the streets of Cadiz, or flirting their fans at a *funcion de toros*.

Safe, as far as being molested by the ruffians around them. Yet, alas! exposed to the danger overhanging all—death from starvation.

A fearful fate threatens the late crew of the

Chilian barque, in horror equalling that to which those left aboard of her have been consigned. Well may they deem it a retribution—that God's hand is upon them, meting out a punishment apporportioned to their crime!

But surely He will not permit the innocent to suffer with the guilty? Let us hope—pray, He will not.

CHAPTER XVI.

LONG SUFFERING.

“*Virgen Santissima!* mother of God, have mercy!”

The cry is heard in the cabin of the *Condor* — Don Gregorio Montijo giving utterance to it.

Several days have elapsed since the desertion of her crew, and she is still afloat, drifting in a south-westerly direction, with all sail set, just as when the pirates put away from her.

Why she has not gone to the bottom is known but to two men—they entrusted with the scuttling.

And just as when left, are the three unfortunate beings aboard: the black cook on his galley bench, the captain and his passenger *vis-à-vis* at

the cabin-table, bound to, and bolt upright in their chairs.

But though the attitudes of all three are unchanged, there is a marked change in their appearance, especially of those in the cabin. For the white man shows the effects of physical suffering sooner than the Ethiopian.

For over five days Don Gregorio, and Lantanas have been enduring agony great as ever tortured Tantalus. It has made fearful inroad on their strength, on their frames. Both are reduced almost to skeletons; cheek-bones protruding, eyes sunken in their sockets. Were the cords that confine them suddenly taken off, they would sink helpless on the floor!

Not all this time have they been silent. At intervals they had conversed upon their desperate situation. For the first day, with some lingering hope of being released; but afterwards despairingly, as the hours passed, and nothing occurred to change it.

Now and then they have heard cries on deck;

knowing they are from the cook ; whom they now believe to be as themselves, bound up, somewhere in the forward part of the vessel.

At first they made some attempt to communicate with him, by answering them ; but found it an idle effort. He may have heard, but could not help them. And now their feeble strength forbids even such exertion of their voices.

Long since have the two men given up all hope of being able to untie the cords keeping them to their chairs. The knots made by the hands of a sailor would defy the efforts of the most skilled *prestidigitateur*.

And at length also have they ceased to converse, or only at periods long apart. Lantanas, after his first throes of fierce rage, has sunk into a sort of stupor, and, with head drooping down to his breast, appears as if life had left him.

Don Gregorio, on the contrary, holds his erect—at least during most part of the day. For, before him is something to be seen—the sea through the stern windows, still open.

On this he keeps his eyes bent habitually; though not with much hope of there seeing aught to cheer him. On its blue expanse he beholds but a streak of white, the frothing water in the vessel's wake, now and then a "school" of tumbling porpoises, or the "spout" of a cachalot whale.

Once, however, an object came within his field of vision, which caused him to start, writhe in his ropes, and cry out to the utmost of his strength. For it was a ship in full sail, crossing the *Condor's* track, and scarce a cable's length astern!

He heard a hail, and called out in response, Lantanas joining him.

And the two kept on shouting for hours after, till their feeble voices failed them; and they again resigned themselves to a despondency, hopeless as ever.

All their shouts have ever brought them were the Bornean apes, that they often hear scampering up and down the cabin-stair, dashing their uncouth bodies against the closed door.

The Chilian has now quite surrendered to despair; while Don Gregorio, who has also lost hope of help from man, still has faith in Heaven. Hence the prayerful appeal; which with unabated fervour he once more sends up:—

“*Virgen Santissima!* mother of God, have mercy!”

All at once Lantanas, catching the words, and raising his head, cries out:

“Virgin! Hach! There’s no virgin!—No mother of God, nor God neither!”

“Captain Lantanas!”

“Don’t captain me! I’m not a captain. I’m a poor miserable creature—starving with hunger—dying of thirst. Merciful virgin, indeed! Where’s her mercy? If she has it, let her show. Let her find me food and drink. Cakes and fruits there! Nothing of the sort. Stones, painted stones! And those other things! Bottles they call them—bottles and decanters. All a deception. They’re imps—some demigods! See how they dance. Let’s join them! Come, old Zan-

zibar! Bring your fiddle! And my Bornean beauties, come you. We'll have a grand *fandango*. We'll make a dancing room of the *Condor's* deck, and kick up our heels high as the cuddy head. That's the way we'll do it. Ha—ha—ha! Ha—ha—ha!"

"O God!" groans Don Gregorio, "Lantanas has lost his reason!"

CHAPTER XVII.

HELP FROM HEAVEN.

FOR long, the Chilian skipper continues to rave, rolling his eyes about, now and then glaring fiercely at Don Gregorio, as though he wished to stretch across the table and tear him. Fortunate he is confined now.

At first the ex-haciendado spoke kindly, endeavouring to soothe him; but seeing it idle, he has ceased; and now makes no further attempt.

To converse with him would be only painful, and indeed the sight is sufficiently so, suggesting to Don Gregorio what may be his own fate. At times he almost fancies himself the same, as sweeps through his soul the thought of his accumulated calamities.

He wishes that death would relieve him, and has prayed for it more than once. He prays for

it again, silently, with his eyes resting on the sea. He awaits the final hour, longing for it to come, his features set in calm, Christian resignation.

Suddenly their expression changes, a ray of renewed hope shooting athwart his face. Not a ray, but a beam, which spreads over his whole countenance, while his eyes kindle into cheerfulness, and his lips become parted in a smile!

Is he about to echo the mad laugh of Lantanas?

No! In that look there is no sign of unseated reason. On the contrary, he gazes with intelligent earnestness, as at something outside demanding investigation.

Soon his lips part farther, not now to smile, but speak words that involuntarily issue from them. Only two little words, but of large import and greatest cheer:

“ A sail ! ”

For such he has espied ; a white speck away off on the line that separates the two blues, but dis-

tinguishable from waif of floating foam or wing of gull. Beyond doubt, a sail—a ship!

Once more, hope is in his heart, which, bounding up, beats audibly within his breast.

Higher and louder, as the white speck shows larger, and assumes shape. For the tall narrow disc, rising tower-like against the sky, can only be the spread canvas of a ship.

And gradually growing taller, he at length sees she is standing towards the barque!

Intently he continues to watch the distant sail! Silently, without saying aught of it to his companion, or in any way communicating with him. It would be of no use; the mind of the Chilian is closed against outward impressions, and now is not the time to attempt opening it.

Hopefully, Don Gregorio continues gazing, but not without anxiety. Once before he has had disappointment from a similar sight. It may be so again.

But, no; that ship was standing across the *Condor's* track, while this is sailing in the same

course—sailing after, apparently, with the intention to come up; and though slowly, surely drawing nearer; as he can tell by her canvas increasing in the bulk, growing broader and rising higher upon the horizon.

A long time elapses—nearly half-a-day—during which he has many hopes and fears, alternating as the hours pass.

But the hopes are at length in the ascendant, and all anxiety passes as the pursuing ship shows her dark hull above the water-line, and he can distinguish her separate sails. They are all set. What joy in his heart as his eyes rest on them! They seem the wings of merciful angels, coming to relieve him from his misery!

And the flag floating above—the flag of England! Were it the banner of his own Spain, he could not regard it with greater gladness, or gratitude. For surely he will be saved now?

Alas! while thus congratulating himself, he sees what causes his heart again to go down within him, bringing back keenest apprehensions.

The strange vessel is still a far distance off, and the breeze impelling her, light all along, has suddenly died down—not a ripple showing on the sea's surface—while her sails now hang loose and limp. Beyond doubt is she becalmed.

But the *Condor*? Will she, too, cease sailing?

Yes; she must, from the same cause. Already she moves slowly, scarce making way. And now—now she is motionless! He can tell it, by the glass rack and lamps overhead, that hang without the slightest oscillation. Anon, the barque gradually swings round, and he loses sight of the ship. Through the windows he still beholds the sea, calm and blue, but vacant; no outline of hull—no expanded sail—no flouting flag to keep up his heart, which is once more almost despondent.

But only for a short time; again rising, as the barque, sheering round, brings once more stern towards the ship, and he sees the latter, and something besides—a boat!

It is down in the water, and coming on toward

the *Condor*, the oar-blades flashing in the sun and flinging spray-drops that seem like silver stars !

The barque swinging round, he has the boat in view but a short while. What matters it now ? He is certain of being saved !

And he looks no longer—only listens.

Soon to hear words spoken in a strong manly voice, to him sweeter than music. It is the hail:

“ Barque ahoy ! ”

In feeble accents he makes answer, and continues to call out, till other voices, echoing along the *Condor's* decks, become commingled with his own.

Then there are footsteps on the quarter-deck, soon after heard descending the cabin-stair.

The handle is turned, the door pushed open, and a swish of fresh air sweeps in, men along with it; as they enter, giving utterance to wild exclamations.

Wrenching his neck around, he sees there are two of them, both in the uniform of naval officers and both known to him !

Their presence causes him strange emotions, and many—too many for his strength, so long and sorely tried.

Overpowered by the sight, he becomes unconscious, as though instead of gladdening, it had suddenly deprived him of life!

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONJECTURES TOO TRUE.

No need to say that the two officers who have entered the *Condor's* cabin are Crozier and Cadwallader. For she is the polacca-barque chased by a frigate, and that frigate the *Crusader*.

The cry simultaneously raised by them is one of strange intonation telling less of surprise, than conjecture too fatally confirmed.

While in chase of the barque, and her national colours were first made out, they had no thought of connecting her with the vessel which Don Gregorio Montijo had chartered to take him to Panama. True, they had heard that this was a Chilian vessel, and her skipper of that nation. But they had also been told she was a *ship*, not a *barque*. And as among the many craft in San Francisco Bay, neither had noticed her, how would

they think of identifying her with the chased polacca.

Gradually, however, as the frigate drew upon her, certain suspicions of a painful nature began to shape themselves in Crozier's mind; still so vague he did not deem it worth while communicating them to Cadwallader. He remembered having seen a *polacca-masted* vessel in the harbour of San Francisco; besides, that she was a *ship*. And so far as his recollection served, she was of the same size as that running before the frigate. Besides, he could distinctly recall the fact of her flying Chilian colours. The peculiar style of her masting had drawn his attention to her.

And while they were still pursuing the barque, and commenting on the coincident statement of the brig and whaler about men having been aboard of her *covered with red hair*, Crozier also recalled a statement strangely significant, which Harry Blew had made to one of the men who had rowed Cadwallader ashore, on the day the *Crusader* sailed. Blew had been aboard the

Chilian vessel, and being asked by his old ship-mate what sort of crew she had, laughingly replied: "Only a *black* man, and two *red* ones." Pressed for an explanation about the red ones, he said they were a couple of *orang-otangs*.

Putting these odd *data* together, and comparing them, the *Crusader's* third lieutenant began to have an uneasy feeling, as they followed the retreating vessel. That she was a barque, and not a ship, meant nothing. As a seaman, he knew how easy the conversion—how often made.

When at length both vessels lay becalmed, and an order for boarding was given, he had solicited the command—by a private word to the frigate's captain, as had Cadwallader the leave to accompany him; the latter actuated by impulses not very dissimilar.

When both at length climbed the barque's sides, saw the red monkeys on deck, and the black man in the galley, their apprehension became sharpened to the keenest foreboding—far more than a presentiment of misfortune.

Alas ! as they entered the *Condor's* cabin, beholding its fulfilment.

The cry that escaped their lips came on the recognition of Don Gregorio Montijo ; followed by other exclamations, as they looked at the two unoccupied chairs, a fan upon the one, a scarf over the back of the other. It was then that Crozier rushing upon deck, sent the cutter off for the surgeon, himself instantly returning to the cabin.

Still wilder—almost a wail—is the shout simultaneously raised by the young officers, when after dashing open the state-room doors, they look in and see all empty !

They turn to those at the table, asking information—entreating it, one answers with a strange Bedlamite laugh ; the other not at all. It is Don Gregorio who is silent. They see that his head is hanging over. He appears insensible.

“ Great God ! is he dead ? ”

They glide towards him, grasp table-knives, and cut the cords that have been confining him. Senseless, he sinks into their arms.

But he is not dead ; only in a faint. Though feebly, his pulse still beats !

With wine they wet his lips—the wine so long standing untasted !

They open his mouth, and pour some of it down his throat, then stand over him to await the effect.

Soon, his pulse grows stronger, and his eyes sparkle with the light of reviving life.

Laid gently along the sofa, he is at length restored to consciousness ; with sufficient strength to answer the questions eagerly put to him. There are two, simultaneously asked, almost echoes of one another.

“ Where is Carmen ? Where is Iñez ? ”

“ Gone ! ” he gasps out. “ Carried away by the—— ”

He does not finish the speech. His breath fails him, and he seems relapsing into the syncope from which he has been aroused. Fearing this, they question him no farther, but continue to administer restoratives. They give him more

wine, making him also eat of the fruits found upon the table.

They have also set the skipper free ; but soon see cause to regret it. He strides to and fro, flings his arms about in frenzied gesture, clutches at decanters, glasses, bottles, and breaks them against one another, or dashes them down upon the floor. He needs restraining, and they do that, by shutting him up in a state-room.

Returning to Don Gregorio, they continue to nurse him ; all the while wishing the surgeon to come.

While impatiently waiting they hear a hail from the top of the cabin stair. It is their coxswain, who shouts :—

“ Below there ! ”

He is about to announce the cutter's return from the frigate.

Ah no ! It is not that ; but something different ; which instead of gratifying, gives them a fresh spasm of pain. Listening, they hear him say :—

“ Come on deck, Mr. Crozier ! There's a bank

o' black fog rollin' up. It's arready close on the barque's starb'rd bow. It look like there's mischief in't; and I believe there be. For God's sake, hurry up, sir!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A STRUGGLE WITH THE STORM.

THE summons of the coxswain is too serious to be disregarded; and soon as hearing it, the two officers hasten upon deck, leaving Don Gregorio reclining along the settee.

Glancing over the barque's starboard bow, they behold a sky black as Erebus. It is a fog-bank, covering several points of the compass. But, while they stand regarding it, it lengthens along the horizon, at the same time rising higher against the heavens. They can see that it is approaching, spreading over the ocean like a pall. And, where it shadows the water, white flakes show themselves, which they know to be froth churned up by the sharp stroke of a wind-squall.

They do not stand idly gazing. All three recognize the threatening danger. They only cast a glance towards the frigate, and, perceiving they can hope for no help from her, at once commence taking measures for themselves.

“To the sheets?” shouts Crozier. “Let fly all!”

At the command, the midshipman and coxswain bound off to execute it, the lieutenant himself assisting; since there are but the three to do the work. For the negro, released by Grummet, despite half a pint of rum poured down his throat, is scarcely able to keep his feet. No help, therefore, to be had from him, nor any one else.

But the three strong men, with confidence in their strength, and with knowledge to comprehend the approaching peril, take the proper steps to avert it—these being, as Crozier has commanded, to let go everything.

Working as if for life, they cast off sheets and halyards, and let the canvas flap free. No time for clewing up, or making snug: no thought of

either. The sails must take their chance, though they get split into shreds, which they are pretty sure to do.

This actually occurs, and soon. Scarce has her canvas been released from its sheets and tacks, when the barque becomes enveloped in a dense cloud, and the wind strikes like a cannon shot against her sails. Luckily, they were loosed in time. If still stiff set, the masts would have gone by the board, or the *Condor* on her beam-ends. And luckily, too, before struck, Grummet had hold of her helm, and, by Crozier's command, brought her before the wind. To attempt "lying to," with her sails in such condition, would be to court destruction. To "scud" is their only chance for safety.

And away go they before the wind, which, first blowing in fitful gusts, soon becomes a steady gale, with now and then a violent burst catching still another sail, and rending it to ribbons.

Soon there is not a sound one, and scarce aught save strips of torn canvas hanging from

the yards, or streaming out like the flags on a signal staff.

Fortunately the barque well obeys her helm, and the young officers contrive to set storm-stay and trysail, thus helping to hold her steady.

During all this time they have not thought of the frigate. Absorbed in the endeavour to save the craft that carries them, they reflect not on what may be their fate should they get separated from their own ship.

At length, this reflection arises in a form to appal them. The frigate is out of sight—has been ever since the commencement of the gale, the fog having drifted between. They do not now know the direction in which she is; nor can they tell whether she has lain-to, or, like themselves, “run.” If the latter, there is a hope she will follow the same course; and, the fog lifting, be again sighted.

Alas! it is more likely she will do the former. Full-manned, she will have taken in sail in good

time, and made all snug, so as to ride out the storm; and, aware of the danger in which they on the barque will be placed, she will not forsake the spot, but assuredly lie to.

Just as they have arrived at this conclusion, they hear a gun booming above the blast. They know it is from the frigate, firing to let them know her whereabouts. But, although the sound reaches them with sufficient distinctness, they cannot tell the direction. Who could at sea, in a fog?"

Listening, they hear it a second time, and soon after a third.

Then again and again; still distinct, but with the same uncertainty as to its direction. For the life of them they cannot determine the point of the compass whence it comes. Even if they knew, it is a question whether they dare set the barque's head towards it, for the storm has increased to a tempest, and it is touch and go for them to keep the Chilian vessel afloat. Out of trim, she is tossed from wave to wave, shipping

seas that threaten to engulf her, or wash everybody overboard.

In this struggle—as it were, for life and death—they lose all hope of being able to keep company with the war-ship—all thought of it. It will be well if they can but save that they are on from going to the bottom of the sea.

Again they hear the firing, several times repeated—that signal that they are unable to answer, or unable to avail themselves of its friendly warning. Situated as they are, it seems sounding a farewell salute—or it may be their death-knell.

Fainter and fainter falls the boom upon their ears; duller and duller at each successive detonation, which tells that the distance between them and the frigate, instead of diminishing, increases. However sad and disheartening, they cannot help it. They dare not put the barque about, or in any way alter her course. They must keep scudding on, though they may never see the *Crusader* again.

At length, no longer do they hear the signal

guns. Whether from greater distance, or louder vociferation of the tempest, they can no more be distinguished amidst its voices.

Throughout all the night the barque scuds, storm-buffeted, shipping huge seas, yet casting them off, and still keeping afloat. Notwithstanding her distressed condition, she rides the gale through to its termination.

As the morning sun gleams over the ocean, along with the subsiding wind, the fog also lifts, leaving both sea and sky clear. And still the *Condor* is afloat, rolling from beam to beam; her tall smooth masts as yet in her, her rigging aright, and her bulwarks unbroken. Only the sails have suffered, and they are all gone.

Grummet is at the wheel, guiding her wayward course; while the two officers stand upon her quarter-deck, with eyes bent abroad, scanning the crests of the big billows that go rumbling along.

But there is no *Crusader* in sight—no frigate—no ship of any kind—nothing but the wide, fathomless ocean!

They are alone upon it, hundreds of leagues from land, aboard a craft they may not be able to manage; and all the more difficult with her sails in shreds. But even were these sound, they have not the strength to set them. They are helpless; but little better off than if they were in an open boat!

In very truth, are they in peril!

But they do not dwell upon it now. A thought still more afflicting is before their minds; and, casting another glance over the ocean—unrewarded as ever—they descend into the cabin, to obtain some particulars of that which has saddened, almost maddened them.

CHAPTER XX.

A CARD RECOVERED.

IT is the fourth day since the English officers boarded the Chilian barque. They are still on board of her, and she still afloat—the one a sequence of the other; or, she would now be at the bottom of the sea. A tough struggle they have had of it; only the three to manage so large a craft in a tempest which, though short-lived, was fierce as ever swept over the Pacific. And with no aid from any of the other three. Captain Lantanas is still delirious, locked up in his state-room, lest in his violence he may do some harm; while Don Gregorio, weak as a child, reclines on the cabin settee, unable to go upon deck. The negro alone, having partially recovered strength, lends some assistance.

The barque's sails still hang tattered from the spars, for they have since encountered other winds, and had neither the time nor strength to clear them. But they have contrived to patch up the foresail, and bend on a new jib from some spare canvas found in the stores. With these she is making way at the rate of some five or six knots to the hour, her head E. and by S. It is twelve o'clock M., and Grummet is at the wheel; the officers on the quarter; Crozier, sextant in hand, "shooting the sun." They have long since given up hope of finding the frigate, or being found by her at sea.

Aware of this, they are steering the crippled vessel towards Panama in hope of there coming across her. In any case, that is the port where they will be most likely to get tidings of her.

A prey to saddened thoughts are the two young officers, as they stand on the quarter-deck of the Chilian vessel taking the altitude of the sun, with instruments her own skipper is no longer able to use. Fortunately, these had not been carried

off, else there would be but little likelihood of their making Panama.

At best, they will reach it with broken hearts ; for they have now heard the whole story in all its dark details, so far as Don Gregorio could give them.

Having already determined their longitude by the barque's chronometer, they have kept it by log-reckoning, and their present observation is but to confirm them in the latitude.

"Starboard your helm!" shouts Crozier to Grummet. "Give her another point to port. Keep her east-by-south. Steady!"

Then turning to Cadwallader, he says :

"If all goes well, we shall make Panama in less than two days. We might do it in one, if we could but set sail enough. Anyhow, I think old Bracebridge will stay for us at least a week. Ah! I wish that were all we had to trouble us. To think they're gone—lost to us—for ever!"

"Don't say that, Ned. There's still a hope we may find them."

“And found, what then? You needn’t answer. Will; I don’t wish you to speak of it. I daren’t trust myself to think of it. Carmen Montijo—my betrothed—captive to a crew of pirate cut-throats—oh!”

Cadwallader is silent. He suffers the same agony, thinking of Iñez.

For a time the picture remains before their minds, dark as their gloomiest fancies can make it. Then across it shoots some rays of hope, saddened, but sweet, for they are thoughts of vengeance. Cadwallader first gives expression to it.

“Whatever has happened to the girls, we shall go after them anyhow. And the robbers, we *must* find them.”

“Find, and punish them,” adds Crozier. “That we surely shall. If it costs all my money, all the days of my life, I’ll revenge the wrongs of Carmen Montijo.”

“And I those of Iñez Alvarez.”

For a while they stand silently brooding upon

that which has brought such black shadow over their hearts. Then Cadwallader says :

“The scoundrels must have plotted it all before leaving San Francisco ; and shipped aboard the Chilian vessel for the express purpose of getting this gold. That’s Don Gregorio’s idea of it, borne out by what he heard from that one of them he knew there—Rocas the name, he says.”

“It seems probable—indeed certain,” rejoins Crozier. “Though it don’t much matter how, or when, they planned the damnable deed. Enough that they’ve done it. But to think of Harry Blew turning traitor, and taking part with them ! That is to me the strangest thing of all, frightfully, painfully, strange.”

“But do you believe he *has* acted in such a manner ?”

“How can one help believing it ? What Don Gregorio heard leaves no alternative. He went off in the boat along with the rest ; besides saying words which prove he went willingly. Only

to think of such black ingratitude! Cadwallader, I'd as soon have thought of suspecting yourself!"

"His conduct, certainly, seems incredible. I believed Blew to be a thoroughly honest fellow. No doubt the gold corrupted him; as it has many a better man. But let's think no more about it; only hope we may some day lay hands on him."

"Ah! If I ever do that! With my arms around him, I once saved his worthless life. Let me but get him in my embrace again, and he'll have a hug that'll squeeze the last breath out of his body!"

"The chance may come yet, and with the whole scoundrelly crew. What brutes they must have been! According to Don Gregorio's account, they were of all nations, and the worst sort of each. The negro says the same. Among them four that spoke Spanish, and appeared to be Spaniards, or Spanish-Americans. Suppose we pay a visit to the fore-castle, and see if we can

find any record of their names. It might be of use hereafter."

"By all means!" assents the lieutenant; "Let us." They proceed toward the fore-deck in silence, their countenances showing a nervous apprehension. For there is a thought in their hearts, which neither has yet made known to the other—black, and more bitter, than even the knowledge of Harry Blew's treason.

Unspoken, they carry it into the fore-castle; but they are not many minutes there, before seeing what brings it out, without either saying word.

A bunk—the most conspicuous of the two tiers—is explored first. They turn out of it papers of various sorts: some letters, several numbers of an old newspaper, and a pack of Spanish playing cards—all pictured. But among them is one of a different sort—a white one, with a name printed upon it.

A visiting card—but whose?

As Crozier picks it up, and reads the name, his blood curdles, the hair crisping on his head:

“Mr. EDWARD CROZIER; H.B.M. FRIGATE CRUSADER.” His own!

He does not need to be told how the card came there. Too well remembers he when, where, and to whom he gave it—to Don Francisco De Lara on the day of their encounter.

Thrusting it into his pocket, he clutches at the letters, and looks at their superscription—“*Don Francisco de Lara!*”

Opening, he rapidly reads them one after another. His hands holding them shake as with a palsy; while in his eyes there is a look of keenest apprehension. For he fears that, subscribed to some, he will find another name—that of Carmen Montijo! If so, farewell to all faith in human kind. Harry Blew's ingratitude has destroyed his belief in man. A letter from the daughter of Don Gregorio Montijo to the gambler Frank Lara, will alike wither his confidence in woman.

With eager eyes, and lips compressed, he continues the perusal of the letters. They are from many correspondents, and relate to various

matters, most about money and *monté*, signed Faustino Calderon.”

As the last of them slips through his fingers, he breathes freely; but with a sigh of self-reproach, for having doubted the woman who was to have been his wife.

Turning to Cadwallader—as himself aware of all—he says in solemn emphasis:

“*Now we know!*”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST LEAF IN THE LOG.

No common pirates then, no mere crew of mutinous sailors, have carried off Carmen Montijo and Iñez Alvarez. It has been done by Francisco de Lara and Faustino Calderon. For although there is no evidence of the latter having been aboard the barque, it is deducible, and not even doubtful. For a scheme such as that, the confederates were not likely to have parted.

The young officers have returned to the quarter-deck, and there stand gazing in one another's faces; on both an expression of anguish, which the new discovery has intensified. It was painful enough to think of their betrothed sweethearts being the sport of rough robbers; but to picture them in the power of De Lara and Calderon—

knowing what they do of these men—is agony itself.

“Yes; it’s all clear,” says Crozier. “No idea of getting gold has brought the thing about. That may have influenced the others who assisted them; but with them the motive was different, I see it now.’

“Do you know, Ned, I half suspected it from the first. You remember what I said as we were leaving San Francisco. After what happened between us and the gamblers, I had my fears about our girls being left in the same place with them. Still, who’d have thought of their following them aboard ship? Above all, with Blew there, and after his promise to protect them! You remember him saying, he’d lay down his life for theirs?”

“He swore it—to me he swore it. Oh! if ever I set eyes on him again I’ll make him suffer for that broken oath!”

“What do you propose doing, after we reach Panama? If we find the frigate there we’ll be obliged to join her.”

“Obliged! there’s no obligation to bind a man situated as I—reckless as this misery makes me, Unless Captain Bracebridge consent to assist us in the search, I’ll go alone.”

“Not alone. There’s one will be with you.”

“I know it, Will. Of course, I count upon you. What I mean is, if Bracebridge won’t help us with the frigate, I’ll throw up my commission, charter a vessel myself, engage a crew, and search every inch of the American coast, till I find where they’ve put in.”

“What a pity we can’t tell the place! They must have been near land to have taken to an open boat.”

“In sight of—close to it. I’ve been questioning Don Gregorio. He knows that much and but little besides. The poor gentleman is almost as crazed as the skipper. A wonder he’s not more. He says they had sighted land that very morning, the first they saw since leaving California. The captain told them they would be in Panama in about two days after. As the boat was being rowed

away, Don Gregorio saw a coast line through the cabin windows, and not far off. He saw their boat too, and they appeared making straight for it. Of course they—— That's all I can get out of the poor old gentleman, at present."

"The negro? Can he tell no better story?"

"I've questioned him too. He's equally sure of their having been close in. What point, he has no idea, any more than the oranges. However, he states a particular fact, which is more satisfactory. A short while before they seized hold of him, he was looking over the side, and saw a strangely shaped hill—a mountain. He describes it as having two tops. The moon was between them, the reason for his taking notice of it. That double-headed hill may yet stand us in stead."

"How unfortunate the skipper losing his senses! If he'd have kept them, he could have told us where he was at the time the barque was abandoned. His getting lunny is enough to make one think the very Fates are against us. By the way, we've never thought of looking at the log

book. That ought to throw some light on the locality.”

“It ought; and doubtless would, if we only had it. Your’e mistaken in saying we never thought of it. I have; and been searching for it everywhere. But it’s gone; and what’s become of it, I know not. They may have thrown it overboard before forsaking the ship—possibly to blot out all traces. Still it’s odd too, De Lara leaving these letters behind!”

“And the barque under all sail.”

“Well, I take it, they were hurried, and of course expected she’d soon go to the bottom. Strange she didn’t. No doubt she’s met only smooth weather till we came aboard her.”

“I wonder where her log-book can be?”

“Not more than I. The old darkey says it used to lie on a little shelf at the turning of the cabin stair. I’ve looked there, but no log-book. As you say, it’s enough to make one believe the Fates were against us. If so, we may never reach Panama, much less live to——”

“ See,” cries Cadwallader, interrupting the despairing speech. “ Those brutes ! what’s that they’re knocking about ? By Jove ! I believe it’s the very thing we’re speaking of ! ”

The brutes are the Myas monkeys, that, away in the ship’s waist, are tossing something between them ; apparently a large book bound in rough red leather. They have mutilated the binding, and, with teeth and claws, are tearing out the leaves, as they strive to take it from one another.

“ It is—it must be the log-book ! ” cries Crozier, as both rush off to rescue it from the clutch of the oranges.

They succeed ; but not without difficulty, and a free handling of handspikes—almost braining the apes before they consent to relinquish it.

It is at length recovered, though in a ruinous condition ; fortunately, however, with the written leaves untern. Upon the last of these is an entry, evidently the latest made :

“ Lat. 7° 20' N. ; Long. 82° 12' W. Light breeze.”

“ Good !” exclaims Crozier, rushing back to the quarter-deck, and bending over the chart. “ With this, and the double-headed hill, we may get upon the track of the despoilers. Just when we were despairing ! Will, old boy ; there’s something in this. I have a presentiment that things are taking a turn, and the *Fates will yet be for us.*”

“ God grant they may !”

“ Ah !” sighs Crozier ; “ if we had but ten men aboard this barque—or even six—I’d never think of going on to Panama, but steer straight for the island of Coiba.”

“ Why the island of Coiba ? ” wonderingly asks Cadwallader.

“ Because it must have been in sight when this entry was made—either it or Hicaron, which lies on its sou’-west side. Look at this chart ; there they are !”

The midshipman bends over the map, and scans it.

“You’re right, Ned. They must have seen one or other of those islands, when the Chilian skipper made his last observation.”

“Just so. And with a light breeze she couldn’t have made much way after. Both the cook and Don Gregorio say it was that. Oh! for ten good hands. A thousand pounds apiece for ten stout, trusty fellows! What a pity in that squall the cutter’s crew weren’t left along with us.”

“Never fear, Ned. We’ll get them again, or as good. Old Bracebridge won’t fail us, I’m sure. He’s a dear old soul, and when he hears the tale we’ve to tell, it’ll be all right. If he can’t himself come with the frigate, he’ll allow us men to man this barque; enough to make short work with her late crew, if we can once stand face to face with them. I only wish we were in Panama.”

“ I’d rather we were off Coiba ; or on shore wherever the ruffians have landed.”

“ Not as we now are—three against twelve ! ”

“ I don’t care for that. I’d give ten thousand pounds to be in their midst—even alone.”

“ Ned, you’ll never be there alone ; wherever you go, I go with you. We have a common cause, and shall stand or fall together.”

“ That we shall. God bless you, Will Cadwalader ! I feel you’re worthy of the friendship—the trust I’ve placed in you. And now, let’s talk no more about it ; but bend on all the sail we can, and get to Panama. After that, we’ll steer for the island of Coiba. We’re so far fortunate in having this westerly wind,” he continues, in a more cheerful tone. “ If it keep in the same quarter we’ll soon come in sight of land. And if this Chilian chart may be depended on, that should be a promontory on the west side of Panama Bay. I hope the chart’s a true one ; for Punta Malo, as its name imports, isn’t a nice

place to make mistakes about. By running too close to it with the wind in this quarter——”

“*Steamer to norward!*” cries a rough voice, interrupting. It is Grummet’s.

The young officers, turning with a start, see the same.

Crozier, laying hold of a telescope, raises it to his eye, while he holds it there, saying :

“You’re right, cox.: it is a steamer. And standing this way! She’ll run right across our bows. Up helm, and set the barque’s head on for her!”

The coxwain obeys; and with a few turns of the wheel brings the *Condor’s* head round, till she is right to meet the steamer. The officers, with the negro assisting, loose tacks and sheets, trimming her sails for the changed course.

Soon the two vessels, going in almost opposite directions, lessen the distance between. And as they mutually make approach, each speculates on the character of the other. They on board the barque have little difficulty in determining that of

the steamer. At a glance they see she is not a war-ship ; but a passenger packet. And as there are no others in that part of the Pacific, she can be only one of the "liners" late established between San Francisco and Panama ; coming down from the former port, her destination the latter.

Not so easy for those aboard the steamship to make out the manner of the odd-looking craft that has turned up in their track, and is sailing straight towards them. They see a barque, polacca-masted, with some sails set, and others hanging in shreds from her yards.

This of itself would be enough to excite curiosity. But there is something besides : a flag reversed flying at her main mast-head—the flag of Chili ! For the distress signal has not been taken down. And why it was ever run up, or by whom, none of those now in the barque could tell. At present it serves *their* purpose well ; for, responding to it, the commander of the steam-packet orders her engines to slow, and then

cease action ; till the huge leviathan, late running at the rate of twelve knots an hour, gradually lessens speed, and at length lies motionless upon the water.

Simultaneously the barque is "hove to," and she lies at less than a cable's length from the steamer.

From the latter the hail is heard first :

"Barque ahoy! What barque is that?"

"The *Condor*—Valparaiso. In distress."

"Send a boat aboard!"

"Not strength to man it."

"Wait, then! We'll board you."

In less than five minutes' time, one of the quarter-boats of the liner is lowered down, and a crew leaps into it.

Pushing off from her side, it soon touches that of the vessel in distress.

But not for its crew to board her. Crozier has already traced out his course of action. Slipping down into the steamer's boat, he makes request to be rowed to the ship; which is done without

questioning. The uniform he wears entitles him to respect.

Stepping aboard the steamship, he sees that she is what he has taken her for : a line-packet from San Francisco, bound for Panama. She is crowded with passengers, at least a thousand seen upon her decks. They are of all qualities and kinds ; all colours and nationalities ; most of them Californian gold-diggers returning to their homes ; some successful and cheerful ; others downcast and disappointed.

He is not long in telling his tale ; first to the commander of the steamer and his officers ; then to the passengers.

For to these last he particularly addresses himself, in an appeal—a call for volunteers—not alone to assist in navigating the barque, but to proceed with him in pursuit of the scoundrels who cast her away.

He makes known his position, with his power to compensate them for the service sought ; both endorsed by the commander of the steamship,

who by good luck is acquainted with, and can answer for, his credentials.

Nothing of this is needed ; nor yet the promise of a money reward. Among these stalwart men are many who are heroes—true Paladins, despite their somewhat threadbare habiliments. And amidst their soiled rags shine pistols and knives, ready to be drawn for the right.

After hearing the young officer's tale, without listening farther, twenty of them spring forward responsive to his call. Not for the reward offered, but in the cause of humanity and right. He would enlist twice or thrice the number, but deeming twenty enough, with these he returns to the *Condor*.

Then the two vessels part company, the steamer continuing on for Panama ; while the barque, now better manned, and with more sail set, is steered for the point where the line of LAT. $7^{\circ} 20'$ N. intersects that of LONG. $82^{\circ} 12'$ W.

CHAPTER XXII.

A LOTTERY OF LIFE AND DEATH.

WHILE these scenes are passing upon the ocean, others of equally exciting character occur upon that desert isle, where, by ill-starred chance for themselves, the pirate crew of the *Condor* made landing.

They are still there, all their efforts to get off having proved idle. But how different now from that hour when they brought their boat upon its beach laden with the spoils of the plundered vessel! Changed not only in their feelings but looks — scarce recognizable as the same men. Then in the full plenitude of swaggering strength, mental as bodily, with tongues given to loud talk; now subdued and silent, stalking about like spectres, with weak, tottering steps; some sitting listlessly upon stones, or lying a stretch along the

earth; not resting, but from sheer inability to stand erect!

Famine has set its seal upon their faces; hunger can be read in their hollow eyes, and pale sunken cheeks; while thirst shows upon their parched and shrivelled lips.

Not strange all this. For nine days they have tasted no food, save shell-fish and the rank flesh of sea-fowl—both in scant supply. And no drink, excepting some rain-water caught in the boat-sail during an occasional slight shower.

All the while have they kept watch with an earnestness such as their desperate circumstances evoked. A tarpauling they have rigged up by oar and boat-hook, set upon the more elevated summit of the two—the highest point on the isle—has failed to attract the eye of any one on the main-land; or if seen, the signal has been disregarded; while to seaward, no ship nor other vessel has been observed—nought but the blank blue of ocean recalling their crime—in its calm tranquillity mocking their remorse!

Repentant are they now; and if they could, willingly would they undo their wicked deed—joyfully restore the stolen gold—gladly surrender up their captives—be but too glad to bring back to life those they have deprived of it.

It cannot be. Their victims left aboard the barque must have long ago gone to the bottom of the sea. In its bed they are now sleeping their last sleep, released from all earthly cares; and they who have so ruthlessly consigned them to their eternal rest, now almost envy it. In their hour of agony, as hunger gnaws at their entrails, and thirst scorches them like a consuming fire, they reckon little of life—some even desiring death!

All are humbled now. Even the haughty Gomez no longer affects to be their leader, and the savage Padilla is tamed to silent inaction, if not tenderness. By a sort of tacit consent, Harry Blew has become the controlling spirit—perhaps from having evinced more humanity than the rest. Now that adversity is on them, their better na-

tures are brought out, and the less hardened of them have resumed the gentleness of childhood's days.

The change has been of singular consequence to their captives. These are no longer restrained, but free to go and come as it pleases them. No more need they fear insult or injury; no rudeness is offered them either by speech, or gesture. On the contrary, they are treated with studied respect, almost with deference. The choicest articles of food—bad at best—are apportioned to them, as also the largest share of the water; fortunately, sufficient of both to keep up their strength. And they in turn have been administering angels—tender nurses to the men who have made all their misery!

Thus have they lived up till the night of the ninth day since their landing on the isle; then a heavy rainfall, filling the concavity of the boat's sail, enables them to replenish the beaker, with other vessels they had brought ashore.

On the morning of the tenth, a striking change

takes place in their behaviour. No longer athirst, the kindred appetite becomes keener, imparting a wolf-like expression to their features. There is a ghoulisn glance in their eyes, as they regard one another, fearful to contemplate—even to think of. For it is the gaze of cannibalism!

Yes, it has come to this, though no one has yet spoken of it; the thing is only in their thoughts.

But as time passes, it assumes substantial shape, and threatens soon to be the subject not only of speech, but action.

One or two show it more than the rest—Padilla most of all. In his fierce eyes the unnatural craving is clearly recognizable—especially when his glances are given to the fair forms moving in their midst. There can be no mistaking that look of hungry concupiscence—the cold calculating stare of one who would eat human flesh.

It is the mid-hour of the day, and there has been a long interregnum of silence; no one having said much on any subject, though there is

a tacit intelligence, that the thoughts of all are on the same.

Padilla, deeming the hour has arrived, break the ominous silence :

“*Amigos!*” he says—an odd appellation, considering the proposal he is about to make—“since there’s no food obtainable, it’s clear we’ve got to die of starvation. Though, if we could only hold out a little longer, something might turn up to save us. For myself, I don’t yet despair but that some coasting craft may come along; or they may see our signal from the shore. It’s only a question of time, and our being able to keep alive. Now, how are we to do that?”

“Ay, how?” asks Velarde, as if secretly prompted to the question.

“Well,” answers Padilla, “there’s a way, and only one, that I can think of. There’s no need for all of us to die—at least, not yet. Some *one* should, so that the others may have a chance of being saved. Are you all agreed to it?”

The interrogatory does not require to be more

explicitly put. It is quite comprehensible; and several signify assent, either by a nod, or in muttered exclamations. A few make no sign, one way or the other; being too feeble, and far gone, to care what may become of them.

“How do you propose, Padilla?”

It is again Velarde who questions.

Turning his eyes towards the grotto, in which the two ladies have taken refuge from the hot rays of the sun, the ruffian replies:

“Well, *camarados!* I don’t see why men should suffer themselves to be starved to death, while women——”

Harry Blew does not permit him to finish his speech. Catching its significance, he cries:

“Avast there! Not another word o’ that. If any o’ us has got to be eaten, it must be a *man*. As for the women, they go last—not first. I, for one, will die afore they do; an’ so ’ll somebody else.”

Striker and Davis endorse this determination; Hernandez too, feebly; but Gomez in speech

almost firm as that of Blew himself. In De Lara's breast there is a sentiment, which revolts at the horrid proposal of his confederate.

It is the first time he and Henry Blew have been in accord ; and being so, there is no uncertainty about the result. It is silently understood, and but waits for one to declare it in words ; which Striker does, saying :

“ Though I hev been a convick, an' don't deny it, I an't a cowart, nor no way afeerd to kick up my heels whensoever I see my time's come. If that be's now, an' Jack Striker's got to die, dash it ! he's ready. But it must be a fair an' square thing. Theerfor, let it be settled by our castin' lots all round.”

“ I agree to that,” growls Padilla ; “ if you mean it to include the women as well.”

“ We don't mean anythin' o' the sort,” says Blew, springing to his feet. “ Ye unmanly scoundrel ! ” he continues, approaching Padilla. “ Repeat your dastardly proposal, an' there'll be no need for drawin' lots. In a minnit more, eyther

you or me 'll make food, for anybody as likes to eat us. Now !”

The Californian, who has still preserved much of his tenacious strength, and all of his ruffian ferocity, nevertheless shrinks and cowers before the stalwart sailor.

“ *Carajo!*” he exclaims, doggedly and reluctantly submitting. “ Be it as you like. I don’t care any more than the rest of you. When it comes to facing Fate, Rafael Rocas isn’t the man to show the white-feather. I only proposed what I believed to be fair. In a matter of life and death, I don’t see why women are any better than men. But if you all think different, then be it as you say. We can cast lots, leaving them out.”

Padilla’s submissive } speech puts an end to the strange debate. The side-issue is decided against him, and the main question once more comes up.

After a time, it too is determined. Hunger demands a victim. To appease it one must die.

The horrid resolve reached, it remains but to

settle the mode of selection. No great difficulty in this, and it is got over by Striker saying :

“ Chums ! theer’s just twelve o’ us, the even dozen. Let’s take twelve o’ them little shells ye see scattered about, an’ put ’em into the boat’s pannikin. One o’ them we can mark. Him as draws out the marked shell, must—I needn’t say what.”

“ Die ” would have been the word, as all understand without hearing it spoken.

The plan is acceptable, and accepted. There seems no fairer for obtaining the fiat of Fate on this dread question.

The shells—*unios*—lie thickly strewn over the ground. There are thousands, all of the same shape and size. By the “ feel ” it would be impossible to tell one from another. Nor yet by their colour, since all are snow-white.

Twelve of them are taken up, and put into the tin pannikin—a quart measure—one being marked with a spot of red—by blood drawn from Striker’s own arm, which he has purposely punctured.

Soon absorbed by the porous substance of the shell, it cannot be detected by the touch.

The preliminaries completed, all gather around, ready to draw. They but wait for him who is on watch beside the spread tarpauling, and who must take his chances with the rest in this lottery of life and death. It is the Dutchman who is above. They have already hailed, and commanded him to come down, proclaiming their purpose.

But he neither obeys them, nor gives back response. He does not even look in their direction. They can see him by the signal-staff, standing erect, with face turned towards the sea, and one hand over his eyes, shading them from the sun. He appears to be regarding some object in the offing.

Presently he lowers the spread palm, and raises a telescope with which he is provided.

They stand watching him, speechless, and with bated breath, their solemn purpose for the time forgotten. In the gleam of that glass they have a fancy there may be life, as there is light.

The silence continues till 'tis seen going down. Then they hear words, which send the blood in quick current through their veins, bringing hope back into their hearts. They are :

“ *Sail in sight!* ”

CHAPTER XXIII.

BY THE SIGNAL STAFF.

“ SAIL in sight ! ”

Three little words, but full of big meaning, of carrying the question of life or death.

To the ears of that starving crew sweet as music, despite the harsh Teutonic pronunciation of him who gave them utterance.

Down drops the pannikin, spilling out the shells; which they have hopes may be no more needed.

At the shout from above, all have faced towards the sea, and stand scanning its surface. But with gaze unrewarded. The white flecks seen afar are only the wings of gulls.

“ Where away ? ” shouts one, interrogating him on the hill.

“ Sou'-westert.”

South-westward they cannot see. In this direction their view is bounded; a projection of the cliff interposing between them and the outside shore. All, who are able, start off towards its summit. The stronger ones rush up the gorge, as if their lives depended on speed. The weaker go toiling after. One or two, weaker still, stay below, to wait the report that will soon reach them.

The first up, on clearing the scarp, have their eyes upon the Dutchman. His behaviour might cause them surprise, if they could not account for it. As said, the beacon is upon the higher of the two peaks, some two hundred yards beyond the cliff's brow. He is beside it, and apparently beside himself. Dancing over the ground, he makes grotesque gesticulations, tossing his arms about, and waving his hat overhead—all the while shouting as if to some vessel close at hand—calling in rapid repetition :

“SHIP, AHOY! AHOY!”

Looking, they can see no ship, nor craft of any kind. For a moment they think him mad, and

fear, after all, it may be a mistake. Certainly there is no vessel near enough to be hailed.

But sending their eyes farther out, their fear gives place to joy almost delirious. There *is* a sail, and though leagues off, seeming but a speck, their practised eyes tell them she is steering that way—running coastwise. Keeping this course, she must come past the isle—within sight of their signal, so long spread to no purpose.

Without staying to reflect farther, they strain on towards the summit, where the staff is erected.

Harry Blew is the first to reach it; and clutching the telescope, jerks it from the hands of the half-crazed Dutchman. Raising it to his eye, he directs it on the distant sail—there keeping it more than a minute. The others have meanwhile come up, and, clustering around, impatiently question him.

“What is she? How’s she standing?”

“A bit o’ a barque,” responds Blew. “And from what I can make out, close huggin’ the

shore. I'll be better able to tell, when she draws out from that clump o' cloud."

Gomez, standing by, appears eager to get hold of the glass ; but Blew seems unwilling to give it up. Still holding it at his eye, he says :

" See to that signal, mates ! Spread the tarpaulin' to its full stretch. Face it square, so's to give 'em every chance of sightin' it."

Striker and Davis spring to the piece of tarred canvas ; and grasping it, one at each corner, draw out the creases, and hold as directed.

All the while Blew stands with the telescope levelled, loath to relinquish it. But Gomez, grown importunate, insists on having his turn, and it is at length surrendered to him.

Blew, stepping aside, seems excited with some emotion he would conceal. Strong it must be, judging from its effects on the ex-man-o'-war's man. On his face there is an expression difficult to describe—surprise amounting to amazement—joy subdued by anxiety. Soon, as having given up the glass, he pulls off his dreadnought, then

divesting himself of his shirt—a scarlet flannel—he suspends it from the outer end of the cross-piece which supports the tarpauling; as he does so, saying to Striker and Davis:

“That’s a signal no ship ought to disregard, and won’t, if manned by Christian men. *She* won’t, if she sees it. You two stay here, and keep the things well spread. I’m goin’ below to say a word to them poor creeturs in the cave. Stand by the staff, and don’t let any o’ them haul it down.”

“Ay, ay!” answers Striker, without comprehending, and somewhat wondering at Blew’s words—under the circumstances, strange. “All right, mate. Ye may depend on me an’ Bill.”

“I know it—I do,” rejoins the ex-man-o’-war’s man, again slipping the pilot-coat over his shirtless skin. “Both o’ you be true to me, and ’fore long I may be able to show as Harry Blew an’t ungrateful.”

Saying this, he separates from them, and hurries back down the gorge.

The Sydney Ducks, left standing by the staff, more than ever wonder at what he has said, and interrogate one another as to his meaning.

In the midst of their mutual questioning, they are attracted by a cry strangely intoned. It is from Gomez, who has brought down the telescope, and holds it in hands that shake as with a palsy.

“What is it?” asks Padilla, stepping up to him.

“Take the glass, Rafael Rocas. See for yourself!”

The contrabandista does as directed.

He is silent for some seconds, while getting the telescope on the strange vessel. Soon as he has her within the field of view, he commences making remarks, overheard by Striker and Davis, giving both surprise—though the latter least.

“Barque she is—polacca-masts. *Carramba!* that’s queer. About the same bulk, too! If it wasn’t that we’re sure of the *Condor* being below, I’d swear it was she. Of course, it can

be only a coincidence. *Santissima!* a strange one!"

Velarde, in turn, takes the telescope; he, too, after a sight through it, expressing himself in a similar manner. Hernandez next—for the four Spaniards have all ascended to the hill.

But Striker does not wait to hear what Hernandez may have to say. Dropping the tarpauling, he strides up to him, and, *sans cérémonie*, jerks the instrument out of his fingers. Then bringing it to his eye, sights for himself.

Less than twenty seconds suffice for him to determine the character of the vessel. Within that time, his glance taking in her hull, traversing along the line of her bulwarks, and then ascending to the tops of her tall smooth masts, he recognizes all, as things with which he is well acquainted.

He, too, almost lets drop the telescope, as, turning to the others, he says in a sacred, but confident voice:

“*By God, it's the Condor!*”

CHAPTER XXIV.

A VERY NEMESIS.

STRIKER'S announcement, profanely as imphatically made, thrills the hearts of those hearing it with fear. Not fear of the common kind, but a weird undefinable apprehension.

“*Caspita!*” exclaims Padilla. “The *Condor* That cannot be. How could it?”

“It's her for all that,” returns Striker. “How so, I don't understan' any more than yourselves. But that yonder craft be the Chili barque, or her ghost, I'll take my affydavy on the biggest stack o' Bibles.”

His words summon up strange thoughts which take possession of the minds of those listening. For how can it be the *Condor*, scuttled—sent to the bottom of the sea? Impossible!

In their weak state, with nerves unnaturally

excited, they almost believe it an illusion—a spectre! One and all are the prey to wild fancies, that strike terror to their guilty souls. Something more than mortal is pursuing—to punish them. Is it the hand of God? For days they have been in dread of God's hand; and now they seem to see it stretched out, and coming towards them! Surely a Fate—an avenging Nemesis!

“It's the barque, beyond a doubt!” continues Striker, with the glass again at his eye. “Everythin' the same, 'ceptin' her sails, the which show patched-like. That be nothin'. It's the Chili craft, and no other. Yonner's the ensign wi' the one star trailin' over her taff'rl. Her, sure's we stan' heer!”

“*Chingara!*” cries Gomez. “Where are they who took charge of the scuttling? *Did* they do it?”

Remembering the men, all turn round, looking for them. They are not among the group gathered around the staff. Blew has long ago

gone down the gorge, and Davis is just disappearing into it.

They shout to him to come back. He hears; but heeds not. Continuing on, he is soon out of sight.

It matters little questioning him, and they give up thought of it. The thing out at sea engrosses all their attention.

Now nearer, the telescope is no longer needed to tell that it is a barque, polacca-masted; in size, shape of hull, sit in the water—everything the same as with the *Condor*. And the bit of bunting, red, white, blue—the Chilian ensign—the flag carried by the barque they abandoned. They remember a blurred point in the central star: 'tis there!

Spectre or not, with all canvas spread, she is standing towards them—straight towards them—coming on at a rate of speed that soon brings her abreast the islet. She has seen their signal—no doubt of that. If there were—it is before long set at rest. For while they are watching her, she

draws opposite the opening in the reef ; then lets sheets loose ; and, squaring her after-yards, is instantly hove to.

A boat is dropped from the davits ; as it strikes the water, men are seen swarming over the side into it. Then the splash of oars, their wet blades glinting in the sun ; as the boat is rowed through the reef-passage.

Impelled by strong arms, it soon crosses the stretch of calm water, and shoots up into the cove.

Beaching it, the crew spring out on the pebbly strand—some not waiting till it is drawn up, but dashing breast-deep into the surf. There are nearly twenty, all stalwart fellows, with big beards—some in sailor garb, but most red-shirted, belted, bristling with bowie-knives and pistols !

Two are different from the rest—in the uniform of naval officers, with caps gold-banded. One of these seems to command, being the first to leap out of the boat ; soon as on shore, drawing his sword, and advancing at the head of the others.

All this observed by the four Spaniards, who are still around the signal-staff, like it, standing fixed; though not motionless, for they are shaking with fear. Their apprehensions, hitherto, of the supernatural, are now real. Even Frank Lara, despite his great courage—his only good quality—feels fear now. For in the officer, leading with drawn sword, he recognizes the man who made smash of his Monté bank!

For some moments, he stands in silence, with eyes dilated. He has watched the beaching of the boat, and the debarking of her crew, without saying word. But, soon as recognizing Crozier, he clutches Calderon by the arm; more vividly than ever now his crime recalled to him, for now its punishment, as that of them all, seems near. There is no chance to escape it. To resist, will only be to hasten their doom—death.

They do not think of resistance, nor yet flight; but remain upon the hill-top, sullen and speechless.

Calderon is the first to break the silence, frantically exclaiming :

“*Santos Dios!* the officers of the English frigate! Mystery of mysteries! What can it mean?”

“No mystery,” rejoins De Lara, addressing himself to the other three; “none whatever. I see it all now, clear as the sun at noonday. Blew has been traitor to us, as I suspected all along. He and Davis have not scuttled the barque, but left her to go drifting about; and the frigate to which these officers belong has come across, picked her up—and lo! they are there!”

“That’s it, no doubt,” says Velarde, otherwise Don Manuel Diaz. “But those rough fellows along with them don’t appear to be men-of-war’s men, nor sailors of any kind. More like gold-diggers, I should say; such as crowd the streets of San Francisco. They must have come thence.”

“It matters not what they are, or where from.

Enough that they're here, and we in their power."

At this Diaz and Padilla, now known as Rafael Rocas, step towards the cliff's edge to have a look below, leaving the other two by the staff.

"What do you suppose they'll do to us?" asks Calderon of De Lara. "Do you think they'll——"

"Shoot, or hang us?" interrupts De Lara; "that's what you'd say. I don't think anything about it. I'm sure of it. One or other they'll do, to a certainty."

"*Santissima!*" piteously exclaims the ex-ganadero. "Is there no chance of escaping?"

"None whatever. No use our trying to get away from them. There's nowhere we could conceal ourselves; not a spot to give us shelter for a single hour. For my part, I don't intend to stir from this spot. I may as well be taken here as anywhere else. *Carramba*, no!" he exclaims, as if something has occurred to make him change his mind. "I shall go below, and

meet my death like a man. No; like a tiger. Before dying, *I shall kill*. Are you good to do the same? Are you game for it?"

"I don't comprehend you," answers Calderon.

"Kill what, or whom?"

"Whomsoever I can. Two for certain."

"Which two?"

"Edward Crozier and Carmen Montijo. You may do as you please. I've marked out my pair, and mean to have their lives before yielding up my own—hers, if I can't his. She shan't live to triumph over me. No; by the Almighty God!"

While speaking, the desperado has taken out his revolver, and holding it at half-cock, spins the cylinder round, to see that all the six chambers are loaded, with the caps on the nipples. Assured of this, he returns it to its holster; and then glances at his *macheté*, hanging on his left hip. All this with a cool carefulness, which shows him determined upon his hellish purpose.

Calderon, trembling at the very thought of it,

endeavours to dissuade him ; urging that, after all, they may be only made prisoners, and leniently dealt with.

He is cut short by De Lara crying out :

“ You may go to a prison and rot there, if it so please you. After what’s happened, that’s not the destiny for me. I prefer death, and vengeance.”

“ Better life, and vengeance,” cries Rocas, coming up, Diaz along with him, both in breathless haste. “ Quick, comrades ! ” he continues ; “ follow me ! I’ll find a way to save the first, and maybe get the last, sooner than you expected.”

“ It’s no use, Rafael,” argues De Lara, misunderstanding the speech of the seal-hunter. “ If we attempt flight, they’ll only shoot us down the sooner. Where could we flee to ? ”

“ Come on ; I’ll show you where. *Carajo!* Don’t stand hesitating ; every second counts now. If we can but get there in time —— ”

“ Get where ? ”

“ *Al boté !*”

On hearing the words, De Lara utters an exclamation of joy. They apprise him of a plan which may not only get him out of danger, but give revenge, sweet as ever fell to the lot of mortal man.

He hesitates no longer, but hastens after the seal-hunter ; who, with the other two, has already started towards the brow of the cliff.

But not to stay there ; for in a few seconds after, the four are descending it ; not through the gorge by which they came up, but another—also debouching into the bay.

Little dream the English officers, or the brave men who have landed with them, of the peril impending. If the scheme of the seal-hunter succeed, theirs will be a pitiful fate : the tables will be turned upon them !

CHAPTER XXV.

ALMOST A MURDER.

AT the cliff's base, the action, simultaneous, is even more exciting.

Having left their boat behind, with a man to take care of it, the rescuers advance towards the inner end of the cove.

At first with caution; till, passing the rock portal, they see the platform and those on it.

Then the young officers rush forward, with no fear of having to fight. Instead of armed enemies to meet them, they behold the dear ones from whom they have been so long apart. Beside them, half-a-dozen figures, more like skeletons than men—with cowed, craven faces, seeming so feeble as to have a difficulty in keeping their feet!

With swords sheathed, and pistols returned to

their holsters, the English officers hasten on, the young ladies rushing out to receive them.

Soon they are together, two and two, breasts touching, and arms enfolded in mutual embrace.

For a while no words—the hearts of all too full for speech. Only ejaculations and kisses, with tears, but not of sorrow.

Then succeeds speech, necessarily brief and half-incoherent; Crozier telling Carmen that her father is still alive, and aboard the barque. He lives—he is safe! that is enough.

Then, in answer to his questions, a word or two on her side. But without waiting to hear all, he turns abruptly upon Harry Blew, who is seen some paces off. Neither by word, nor gesture, has the sailor yet saluted him. He stands passive, a silent spectator; as Crozier supposes, the greatest criminal on earth. In quick retrospect of what has occurred, and what he has heard from Don Gregorio, how could it be otherwise?

But he will not condemn without hearing him,

and, stepping up to the ex-man-of-war's man, he demands explanation of his conduct, sternly saying :

“ Now, sir, I claim an account from you. Tell your story straight, and don't conceal aught, or prevaricate. If your treason be as black, as I believe it, you deserve no mercy from me. And your only chance to obtain it, will be by telling the truth.”

While speaking, he has again drawn his sword, and stands confronting the sailor—as if a word were to be the signal for thrusting him through.

Blew is himself armed with both pistol and knife. But, so far from touching either, or making any sign of an intention to defend himself, he remains cowed-like, his head drooping down to his breast.

He gives no response. His lips move not ; neither his arms nor limbs. Alone, his broad chest heaves and falls, as if stirred by some terrible emotion.

His silence seems a confession of guilt !

Taking, or mistaking, it for this, Crozier cries out:

“Traitor! Confess, before I run this blade through your miserable body!”

The threat elicits an answer.

“You may kill me, if you wish, Master Edward. By rights, my life belongs to ye. But, if you take it, I’ll have the satisfaction o’ knowin’, I’ve done the best I could to prove my gratefulness for your once savin’ it.”

Long before he has finished his strange speech, the impending stroke is stayed, and the raised blade dropped point downward. For, on the hand which grasps it, a gentler one is laid, a soft voice saying:---

“Hold, Eduardo! *Dios de mi alma!* What would you do? You know not. This brave man,—to him I owe my life—I and Iñez.”

“Yes,” adds Iñez, advancing; “more than life. ’Tis he who protected us.”

Crozier stands trembling, the sword almost shaken from his grasp. And while sheathing it,

he is told how near he has been to doing that which would ever after have made him miserable.

He feels like one withheld from murder—almost parricide. For to have killed Harry Blew, would have been like killing his own father.

The exciting episode is almost instantly succeeded by another, even more stirring, and longer sustained. While Carmen is proceeding to explain her interference on behalf of Blew, she is interrupted by cries coming up from the beach. Not meaningless shouts, but words of ominous import.

“ Ahoy, there! help! help!”

Coupled with them, Crozier hears his own name, then the “ Help, help!” reiterated; recognizing the voice of the man left in charge of the boat—Grummet.

Without hesitating an instant, he springs off toward the strand, Cadwallader and the gold-diggers following; two staying to keep guard over those of the robbers who have surrendered.

On clearing the rocky ledge, they see what is

causing the coxswain to sing out in such terrified accents. Grummet is in the boat, but upon his feet, with a boat-hook in his hands, which he brandishes in a threatening manner, shouting all the while. Four men are making towards him fast as their legs can carry them. They are coming along the beach from the right side of the cove.

At a glance the English officers recognize two of them—De Lara and Calderon—sooner from their not meeting them there unexpectedly. For aware that they are on the isle, they were about to go in quest of those gentlemen, after settling other affairs.

No need to search for them now. There they are, with their confederates, rushing direct for the boat—already within pistol-shot of it.

Nor can there be any doubt about their intention to seize upon the boat and carry her off!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TABLES NEARLY TURNED.

THE sight thus unexpectedly brought before the eyes of the rescuers sends a shiver through their hearts, and draws exclamations of alarm from their lips. With quick intuition one and all comprehend the threatened danger. All at that moment remember having left only two or three men on the barque; and, should the pirates succeed in boarding, they may carry her off to sea, leaving themselves on the isle.

The prospect is appalling! But they do not dwell upon it; they have neither time, nor need. It is too clear, like a flash passing before their minds, in all its dread details!

Without waiting to exchange word with one another, they rush on to arrest the threatened catastrophe, bounding over the rocks, crash-

ing through shells and pebbles. But they are behind time, and the others will reach the boat before them!

Crozier, perceiving this, shouts to the coxswain,—

“Shove off, Grummet! Into deep water with you!”

Grummet, understanding what is meant, brings the boat-hook point downward, and with a desperate effort, pushes the keel clear, sending the boat adrift.

But before he can repeat the push, pistols are fired, and, simultaneous with their reports, he is seen to sink down, and lie doubled over the thwarts.

A yell of vengeance peals from the pursuing party; and, maddened, they rush on. They will be too late! Already the pirates have reached the boat, now undefended; and all four together, swarming over the gunwale, drop down upon the thwarts, each as he does so seizing hold of an oar, and shipping it.

In agony, Crozier cries out,—

“O God! are they to get away—these guilty, red-handed wretches?”

It would seem so. They have already dipped their oar-blades into the water, and commenced pulling, while they are beyond pistol-range.

Ha! something stays them! God is not for them. Their arms rise and fall, but the boat moves not! Her keel is on a coral bottom; her bilge caught upon its rough projections. Their own weight pressing down, holds her fast, and their oar-strokes are idly spent!

They had not thought of being thus stayed; though it proves the turning-point of their fate.

No use their leaping out now, to lighten the boat; no time for that, nor any chance to escape. But two alternatives stare them in the face—resistance, which means death; surrender, that seems the same.

De Lara would resist and die; so also Rocas. But the other two are against it, instinctively

holding on to whatever hope of life be left them.

The craven Calderon cuts short the uncertainty by rising erect, stretching forth his arms, and crying out in a piteous appeal for mercy.

In an instant after they are surrounded, the boat grasped by the gunwale, and dragged back to the shore.

Crozier with difficulty restrains the angry gold-diggers from shooting them down on the thwarts. Well for them the coxswain has not been killed, but only wounded, and in no danger of losing his life. Were it otherwise, theirs would be taken on the spot.

Assured of his safety, his rescuers pull the four wretches out of the boat; then disarming, drag them up to the platform, and bestow them in the larger cave; for a time to be their prison, though not long. For, there is a judge present, accustomed to sit upon short trials, and pass quick sentences, soon succeeded by their execution. He is the celebrated *Justice Lunch*.

Represented by a stalwart digger—all the others acting as jury—the trial is speedily brought to a termination. For the four of Spanish nationality the verdict is guilty—the sentence, *death*—on the scaffold.

The others, less criminal, are to be carried on to Panama, and there delivered over to the Chilian consul; their crime being mutiny, with robbery, and abandonment of a Chilian vessel.

An exception is made in the case of Striker and Davis. The “Sydney Ducks” receive conditional pardon, on promise of better behaviour throughout all future time. This they obtain by the intercession of Harry Blew, in accordance with the hint he gave them while they were standing together beside the spread tarpauling.

* * * * *

Of the men sentenced to be hanged, one meets his fate in a different manner. The gold-dust has been recovered, packed, and put into the boat. The señoritas are cloaked, and impatient

to be taken back to the barque, yearning to embrace him they have so long believed dead.

The English officers stand beside them; all awaiting the last scene of the tragedy—the execution of the condemned criminals.

The stage has been set for it; this the level plot of ground in front of the cavern's mouth. A rope hangs down with a running noose at one end; the other, in default of gallow's arm and branch of tree, rigged over the point of a projecting rock.

All this arranged, De Lara is led out first, a digger on each side of him. He is not tied, nor confined in any way. They have no fear of his making his escape.

Nor has he any thoughts of attempting it; though he thinks of something else, as desperate and deadly. He will not die like a scared dog, but as a fierce tiger; to the last thirsting for blood, to the end trying to destroy—to kill! The oath sworn by him above on the cliff, he still is determined on keeping.

As they conduct him out of the cave, his eyes, glaring with lurid light, go searching everywhere, till they rest upon a group some twenty paces distant. It is composed of four persons : Crozier and Carmen, Cadwallader and Iñez, standing two and two.

At the last pair De Lara looks not, the first enchaining his attention. Only one short glance he gives them ; another to a pistol which hangs holstered on the hip of a gold-digger guarding him.

A spring, and he has possession of it ; a bound, and he is off from between the two men, and rushing on towards the group standing apart !

Fortunately for Edward Crozier—for Carmen Montijo as well—there are cries of alarm, shouts of warning, that reach him in time.

He turns on hearing them, sees the approaching danger, and takes measures to avert it. Simple enough these—but the draw-

ing of his revolver, and firing at the man who advances.

Two shots are heard, one on each side, almost simultaneous; but enough apart to decide which of the two who fired must fall.

Crozier's pistol had cracked first; and as the smokes of both swirl up, the gambler is seen stretch upon the sward—the blood spurting from his breast, and spreading over his shirt bosom!

Harry Blew, rushing forward, and bending over him, cries out:

“Dead! Shot through the heart—a brave heart too! What a pity 'twas so black!”

“Come away, *mia querida!*” says Crozier to Carmen. “Your father will be suffering from anxiety about you. You've had enough of the horrible. Let us hope this is the end of it.”

Taking his betrothed by the hand, he leads her down to the boat—Cadwallader and Iñez accompanying them.

All seat themselves in the stern-sheets, and

wait for the diggers ; who soon after appear, conducting their prisoners, the pirate crew of the *Condor* ; short four left behind—a banquet for the *caracaras* !

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SAILOR'S TRUE YARN.

It is the second day after the tragedy upon the isle, and the Chilian barque has sailed away from the Veraguan coast, out of that indentation known upon modern maps as “Montijo Bay.”

She has long since rounded Cabo Mala, and is standing in for the port of Panama. With a full crew—most of them old and able seamen—no fear but she will reach it now.

Crozier in command, has restored Harry Blew to his old rank of first-officer; which so far from having forfeited, he is now deemed to doubly deserve. But still weak from his long privation, the ex-man-o'-war's man is excused from duty, Cadwallader doing it for him.

Harry is strong enough, however, to tell the

young officers what they are all ears to hear—the story of that *Flag of Distress*. Their time hitherto taken up attending upon their *fiancées*, they have deferred calling for the full account, which only the English sailor can give them.

Now having passed Cabo Mala, as if with that promontory of bad repute all evil were left behind, they are in the mood to listen to the narration in all its details; and for this have summoned the chief-officer to their side.

“Your honors!” he begins, “it’s a twisted-up yarn, from the start to the hour ye hove in sight; an’ if ye hadn’t showed yerselves just in the nick o’ time, an’ ta’en the twist out o’ it, hard to say how ’twould a ended. No doubt, in all o’ us dyin’ on that desert island, an’ layin’ our bones there. Thank the Lord, for our delivery—’ithout any disparagement to what’s been done by both o’ you, young gentlemen. For that He must ha’ sent you, an’ has had a guidin’ hand throughout the whole thing, I can’t help thinkin’, ’specially when I look back on the scores o’

chances that seemed goin' against the right, an' still sheered round to it after all."

"True," assents Crozier, honouring the devout faith of the sailor. "Your're quite right in ascribing it to Divine interference. Certainly, God's hand seems to have been extended in our favour. But go on!"

"Well, to commence at the beginnin', which is when you left me at San Francisco. As I told Master Willie, that day he comed ashore in the dingy, I war engaged to go chief-mate in the Chili barque. She war then a ship; afterward converted as ye see, through our shortness o' hands.

"When I went aboard her, an' for sev'ral days after, I war the only thing in the shape o' sailor she'd got. Then her captain—that poor crazed creetur below—put advertisements in the papers, offering big pay; the which, as I then supposed, brought eleven chaps, callin' themselves sailors, an' shippin' as such. One o' 'em, for want o' a better, war made second-mate—his name bein' en-

tered on the books as Padilla. He war the last o' the three swung up', an' if ever man desarved hangin', he did, bein' the cruellest scoundrel o' the lot.

“ After we'd waited another day or two, an' no more makin' appearance, the skipper made up his mind to sail. Then the old gentleman, along wi' the two saynoreetas, came aboard; when we cleared an' stood out to sea.

“ Afore leavin' port, I had a suspishun about the sort o' crew we'd shipped. But soon's we are fairly afloat, it got to be somethin' worse than suspishun; I war sartin then we'd an ugly lot to deal with. Still, I only believed them to be bad men—an', if that war possible, worse seamen. I expected trouble wi' them in sailin' the vessel; an' a likelihood o' them bein' disobedient. But on the second night after leavin' land, I found out somethin' o' a still darker stripe—that they are neither more nor less than a gang o' piratical conspirators, an' had a plan arready laid out. A lucky chance led to me discoverin' their infarnal

design. The two we've agreed to let go off—Jack Striker an' Bill Davis—both old birds from the convict gangs o' Australia—war talkin' it over atween themselves, an' I chanced to overhear them. What they sayed made everythin' clear—as it did my hair to stand on eend. 'Twar a scheme to plunder the ship o' the gold-dust Don Gregorio hed got in her; an' carry off your young ladies. Same time they war to scuttle the vessel, an' sink her; first knockin' the old gentleman on the head, as well as the skipper; whiles your humble sarvint an' the darkey are to be disposed o' same sweet fashion.

“ On listenin' to the dyabolikal plot, I war clear dumfounded, an' for a while didn't know what to do. 'Twar a case o' life an' death to some o' us; an' for the saynoreetas, somethin' worse. At first, I thort o' telling Captain Lantanas, an' also Don Gregorio. But then I seed if I shud, that 'twould only make death surer to all as were doomed. I knowed the skipper to be a man o' innocent, unsuspushus nature, an' mightn't gie

belief to such 'trocious rascality, as bein' a thing possible. More like he'd let out right away, an' bring on the bloody bizness sooner than they intended it. From what Striker an' Davis said, I made out that it war to be kept back till we should sight land near Panyma.

“ Well ; after a big spell o' thinkin', I seed a sort o' way out of it—the only one appearin' possible. 'Twar this : to purtend joinin' in wi' the conspirators, an' put myself at thar head. I'd larnt from the talk o' the two Sydney Ducks, there war a split 'mong them, 'bout the dividin' o' the gold-dust. I seed this would gie me a chance to slip in along wi' them. So takin' advantage o' it, I broached the bizness to Striker that same night, an' got into his confidence, an' their councils ; arterwards obtainin' the influence I wanted.

“ Mind, gentlemen ! it took a smart show o' trickery and manœuvrin'. 'Mong other things, I had to appear cool to the cabin people throughout all the voyage—specially them two sweet creeturs. Many's the time my heart ached thinkin' o' your-

self, Mr. Crozier, as also Master Willie—an' then o' your sweethearts, an' what might happen, if I shed fail in my plan for protectin' 'em. When they wanted to be free an' friendly, an' onct began talkin' to me, I hed to answer 'em gruff an' growlin', knowin' that eyes war on me all the while, an' ears listenin'. As to tellin' them what was before, or givin' them the slimmest hint o' it, that would a spoilt my plans, an' ruined everything. They'd a gone straight to the old gentleman, an' then it would a been all up wi' us. 'Twar clear to me they all couldn't be saved, an' that Don Gregorio himself would hev to be sacrificed, as well as the skipper an' cook. I thought that dreadful hard; but thar war no help for't, as I'd have enough on my hands in takin' care o' the women, without thinkin' o' the men. As the Lord has allowed, an' thank Him for it, all ha'e been saved!"

The speaker pauses, in the fervour of his gratitude; which his listeners, respecting, in silence

wait for him to continue the narration. He does so :

“ At last, on sightin’ land, as agreed on, the day had come for the doin’ of the dark deed. It war after night when they set about it, myself actin’ as a sort o’ recognized leader. I’d played my part, so’s to get control o’ the rest. We first lowered a boat, puttin’ our things into her. Then we separated, some to get out the gold-dust, others to seize the saynoreetas. I let Gomez look after them, for fear of bringing on trouble too soon. Me an’ Davis—who chances to be a sort o’ Jack carpenter—were to do the scuttlin’; an’, for that purpose, went down into the hold. There, I proposed to him to give the doomed ones a chance for their lives, by lettin’ the barque float a bit longer. Though he be a convict, he warn’t nigh so bad as the rest.

“ He consented to my proposal, an’ we returned on deck ’ithout tapping the barque’s bottom timbers.

“ Soon’s I had my head over the hatch

coamin', I seed them all below in the boat, the girls along wi' them. I didn't know what they'd done to the Don an' skipper. I had my fears about 'em, thinkin' they might ha' been murdered, as Padilla had proposed. But I daren't go back to the cabin then, lest they might shove off, an' leave us in the lurch: as some war threatenin' to do, more than one wantin' it, I know. If they'd done that—well, it's no use sayin' what might ha' been the upshot. Tharfor, I had to hurry down into the boat. Then, we rowed away; leavin' the barque just as she'd been the whole o' that day. As we pulled shoreward, we could see her standin' off, all sails set—same as tho' the crew war aboard o' her workin' 'em."

"But her ensign reversed?" asks Cadwallader. "She was carrying it so, when we came across her. How came that, Harry?"

"Ah! the bit o' buntin' upside down! I did that myself in the dark; thinkin' it might get them a better chance o' bein' picked up. I'd

just time to do it afore droppin' into the boat."

"And you did the very thing!" exclaims Crozier. "I see God's hand in that surely! But for the distress signal, the *Crusader* would have kept on without giving chase; and——. But, proceed! Tell us what happened afterwards."

"Well; we landed in the island, not knowin' it to be a island. An' theer's another o' the chances, showin' we've been took care o' by the little cherub as sits up aloft. If 't hed been the mainland—well, I needn't tell ye, things would now be different. After landin', we stayed all night on the shore; the men sleeping in the biggest o' the caves, while the ladies occupied a smaller one. I took care 'bout that separation myself, detarmined they shouldn't come to no harm.

"That night theer war a thing happened which I dar say they've told you; an' 'twar from them I afterwards larned that Gomez an' Hernandez war no other than the two chaps you'd trouble wi' at

San Francisco. They went into the cave, an' said some insultin' things to the saynoreetas; I warn't far off, an' would a made short work wi' them, hed it goed farther than talk.

“ Well; up at a early hour next mornin', we found the boat had drifted off seaward, an' got bilged on the breakers. But supposin' we shouldn't want her any more, nobody thought anythin' about it. Then comed the dividin' o' the gold-dust, an' after it the great questyun—leastwise, so far as I war consarned—as to who should take away the girls. I'd been waitin' for this, an' for the settlin' o't I war ready to do or die. Gomez an' Hernandez war the two who laid claim to 'em—as I knowed, an' expected they would. Pretendin' a likin' for Miss Carmen myself, an' puttin' Davis up to what I wanted bout the tother, we also put in our claim. It ended in Gomez an' me goin' in for a fight; which must a tarminated in the death o' one or other o' us. I hed no dread o' dyin'; only from the fear o' its leavin' the synoreetas unprotected. But thar war no help for 't, an' I agreed to the

duel; which war to be fought first wi' pistols, an' finished up, if need be, wi' the steel.

“Everythin' settled, we war 'bout settin' to, when one o' the fellows—who'd gone up the cliff to take a look ahead—just then sung out, that we'd landed on a island. Recallin' the lost boat, we knew that meant a drea'ful danger. In coorse it stopped the fight, an' we all rushed up to the cliff.

“When we saw how things stood, there war no more talk o' quarrellin'. The piratical scoundrels war scared nigh out o' thar senses; an' would a been glad to get back aboard the craft they'd come out o', the which all, 'ceptin' Davis an' myself, supposed to be at the bottom o' the sea.

“After that, 'twar all safe, as far as consarned the saynoreetas. To them as wanted 'em so bad, they war but a second thought, in the face of starvation; which soon tamed the wolves down, an' kep 'em so till the last o' the chapter.

“Now, young gentlemen; ye know how Harry Blew hev behaved, an' can judge for yourselves,

whether he's kep the word he gied you 'fore leavin' San Francisco."

"Behaved nobly, grandly!" cries Crozier. "Kept your word like a man: like a true British sailor! Come to my arms—to my heart, Harry! And forgive the suspicions we had, not being able to help them. Here, Will! Take him to yours; and show him how grateful we both are, to the man who has done more for us than saving our lives."

"Bless you, Blew! God bless you!" exclaims Cadwallader, promptly responding to the appeal; and holding Harry in a hug that threatens to crush in his ribs.

The affecting scene is followed by an interval of profound silence; broken by the voice of Grummet, who, at the wheel, is steering straight into the port of Panama, now in sight.

"Mr. Crozier!" calls out the old coxswain, "do ye see that craft—the one riding at anchor, out yonder in the roadstead?"

All three turn their eyes in the direction indi-

cated ; soon as they have done so, together exclaiming :

“ *The Crusader !* ”

* * * * *

The last incident of our tale takes place at Cadiz, in a grand cathedral church ; before the altar of which, stand two English naval officers, and, alongside each, a beautiful Spanish damsel, soon to be his wedded wife.

It scarce needs to tell, that the bridegrooms are Edward Crozier and Willie Cadwallader—both now lieutenants. Nor need we say, who are the brides ; since they are to be given away by Don Gregorio Montijo.

As little necessary to speak of the ceremonial splendour of that double wedding—long time the *novedad* of Cadiz.

Enough to say, that present at it are all the wealth and fashion of the old Andalusian city, with foreign consuls, and the commanders of warships in the port ; conspicuous amongst these,

Captain Bracebridge, and the officers of H.B.M. frigate *Crusader*.

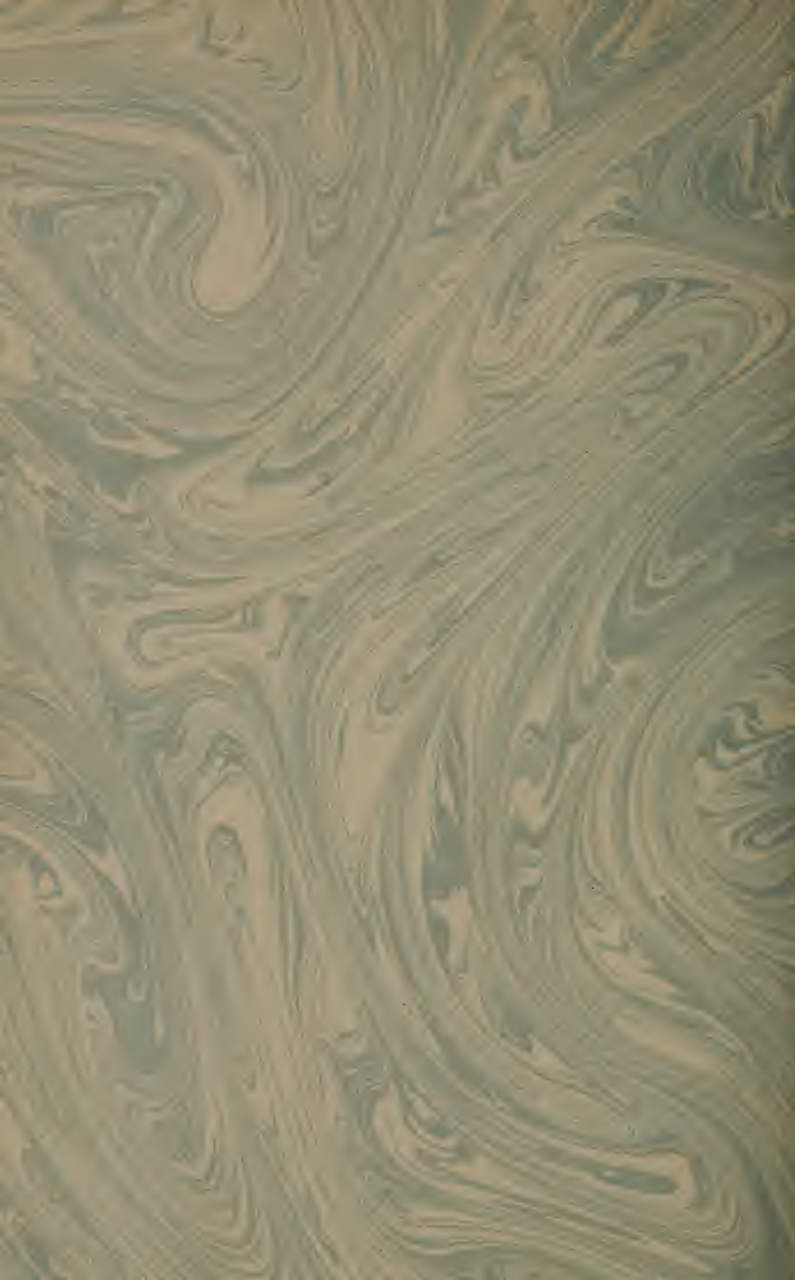
Also two other men of the sea—of its merchant service; to hear of whose presence there will, no doubt, make the reader happy, as it does both the brides and the bridegrooms to see them. They belong to a ship lying in the harbour, carrying polacca masts, on her stern lettered “EL CONDOR;” one of the two being her captain, called Lantanas; the other her chief-officer, by name Blew.

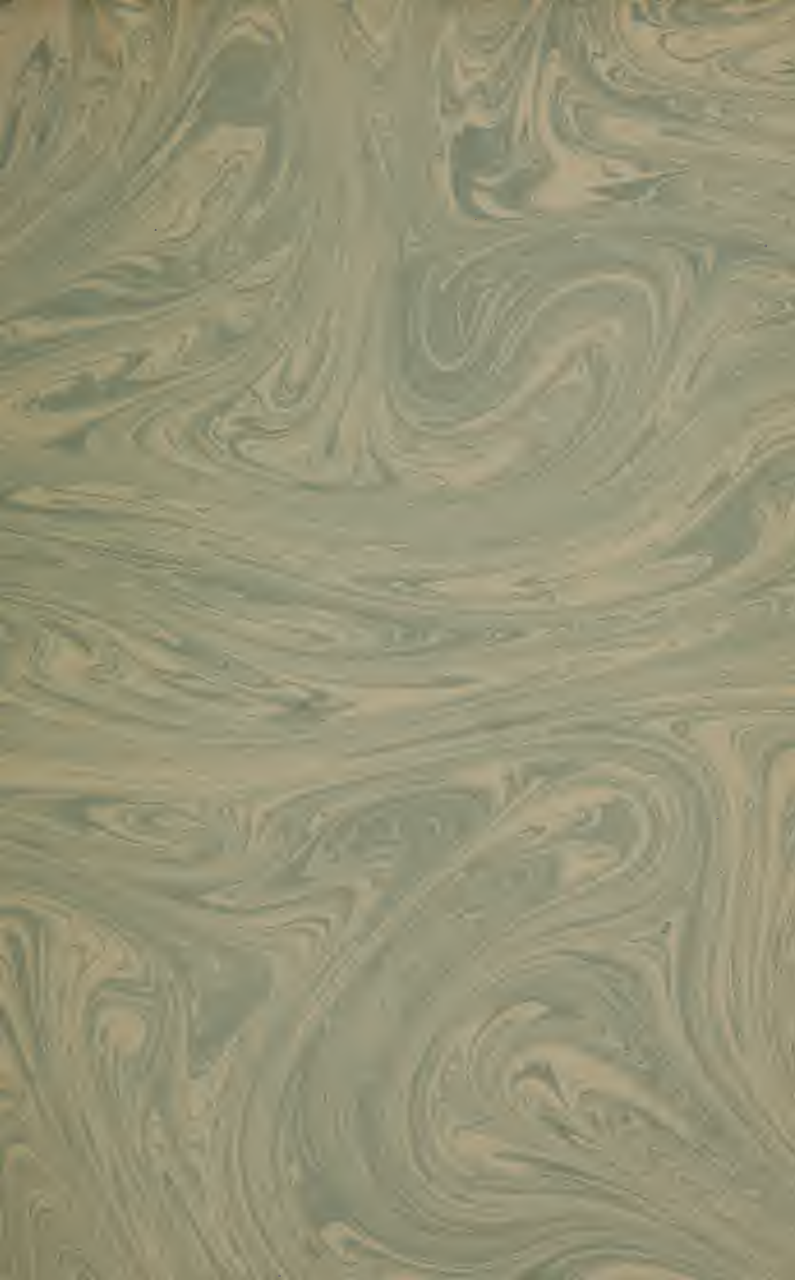
God has been just, and good, to the gentle Chilian skipper, having long since lifted from his mind the cloud that temporarily obscured it. He now knows all, and above all, Harry Blew in his true colours; and, though on the *Condor's* deck they are still captain and mate, when below by themselves in her cabin, all distinction of rank disappears, and they are affectionate friends—almost as brothers.

In the prosperous trading-craft, *Condor*, recon-verted into her original shape of ship—regularly

voyaging between Valparaiso and Cadiz, exchanging the gold and silver of Chili for the silks and sweet wines of Spain—but few would recognize a barque once chased over the South Sea, believed to be a spectre; and, it is to be hoped, no one will ever again see her sailing under a

FLAG OF DISTRESS.





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